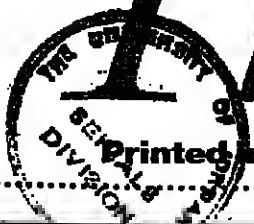


Friday April 3 1998

Table with exchange rates for various currencies including US Dollar, British Pound, and others.

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



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The unique sports magazine

Sport98

Martin Thorpe sees Chelsea play Vicenza for a European final place



Decca Aitkenhead

'It's in my genes'

Comment, page 12

Incorporating today's television, radio and European weather

Japan economy near collapse

Dire warnings as recession bites

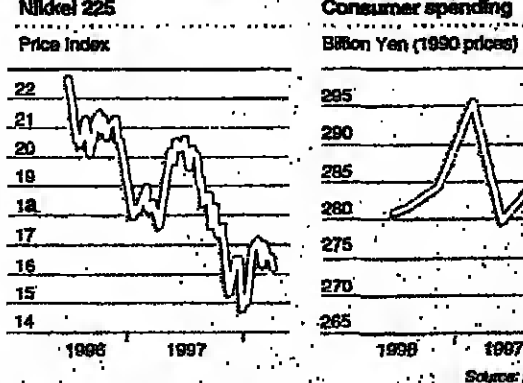
Mark Atkinson and Ian Black

JAPAN, the world's second largest economy, stood on the brink of disaster yesterday as it effectively slipped into recession, threatening to send shock waves around the globe.

Ohga, president of the electronics giant Sony, who said: "The Japanese economy is on the verge of collapsing. If the economic situation continues to decline... this will no doubt have a damaging effect on the world economy."

In August 1994, the central bank said. Gerard Lyons, chief economist at the Japanese bank DKB International in London, said: "This confirms that the Japanese economy is in deep recession. The rest of the world should sit up and take notice, particularly the Bank of England's monetary policy committee. If they hike interest rates when they meet next week, we might as well shove our heads in the sand."

Japan's cash flow squeeze



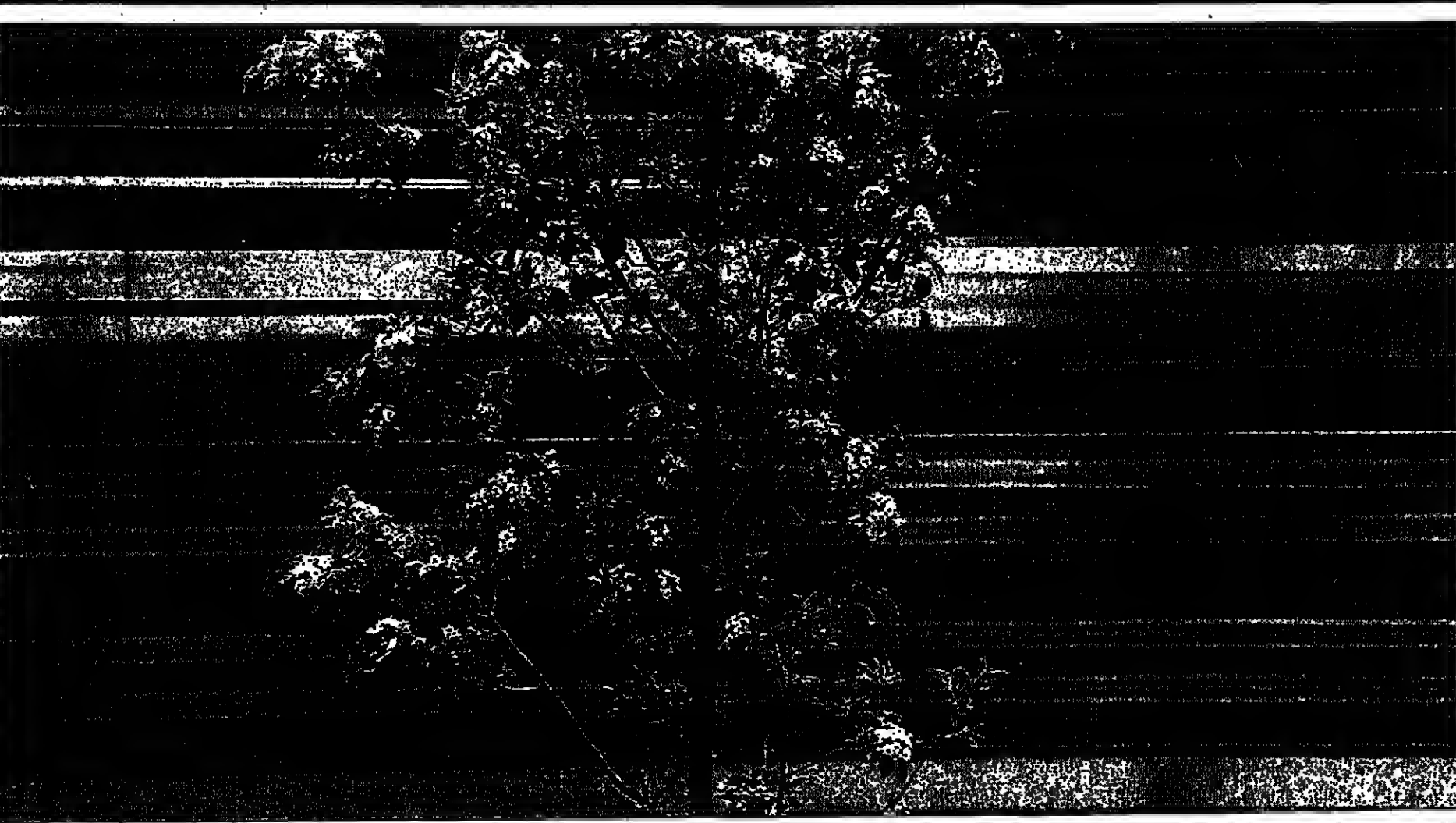
has already been shaken by the collapse of Yamaichi Securities Co, which folded in November after admitting to concealing 264.8 billion yen (£1.2 billion) in losses. Another 26.6 billion yen was discovered yesterday.

backdrop which has seen: the authorities admit that growth is unlikely to reach its target in this financial year of 0.1 per cent, the first time in 23 years the economy will have contracted;

prices have fallen every year, leaving commercial prices in Tokyo now some 70 per cent below their peak; stagnant consumer spending.

trying desperately to retrieve the situation ever since by announcing a series of fiscal packages. But none of them has been big enough to satisfy the country's foreign critics.

Blight in the city



Full of youthful vigour, but fewer than 50 per cent of saplings planted in city streets survive beyond their first year, and life expectancy is only 32 years

Dying young: Britain's trees wilting under urban stress

Oaks, ashes, chestnuts too weak to withstand pollution and paving

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

THEY may look solid and dependable but at root they're as insecure as the rest of us. Some even get so stressed out they throw a wobbly, casting off limbs in an effort to survive city life.

and far more likely to survive. Glynn Percival, of the Scottish Agricultural College in Ayrshire, said it was time to change the attitude to urban tree planting.

Struggling to survive

Overall, however, the picture is bleak. Fewer than 50 per cent of saplings planted in city streets survived their first year.

In the city

- Trees that do well: river birch, alder, pear
- Trees that suffer: oak, ash, horse chestnut, apple



torians had addressed the problem in London by importing plane trees from Albania, which were tough enough to survive the pea soup fogs. They gathered the pollen in their bark and then discarded it, leaving a pretty pattern on their trunks.

Horae chestnuts, frequently planted in Britain, were a positive danger when stressed, simply throwing off a whole limb. "When I have been called to a tree in distress that has started shedding whole branches it is always a horse chestnut. They should never be planted in cities, they could kill people."

Car bomb plot foiled

John Mullin Ireland Correspondent

IRISH police yesterday intercepted a huge car bomb bound for the British mainland as hardline republican terrorists stepped up their attempts to derail the peace process as it reaches a climax.

cepted this year were discovered close to the Northern Ireland border. Car bombs believed to have been put together in the Republic devastated the Mid-Ulster towns of Moira and Portadown two months ago.

Prague Writers' Festival 1998

The 8th Prague Writers' Festival presents a selection of fine authors from the Czech Republic and around the world. Meet them at the Franz Kafka Centre, Old Town Square, at 7 pm from 20 to 25 April.

Table listing the schedule of the Prague Writers' Festival 1998, including dates, authors, and topics.

Navigation bar for The Guardian website, including links to Britain, World News, Analysis, Finance, and other sections.

Footer for The Guardian newspaper, including contact information and the masthead logo.

Sketch

Dialectically well-refreshed



Simon Hoggart

TO Industry: Questions, to hear my favourite minister, Ian McCartney. In the past I have found his thick Scottish accent hard to follow, but no longer.

The other day he kindly gave me copy of Michael Munro's guide to Glaswegian dialect, *The Complete Patter*, and since then I have understood almost half of what he says.

Many of the words are useful for a political reporter. A Benson, for instance, named after the Butler in the old TV series *Soap*, means a toady or a crawler, which would apply to around 60 per cent of Labour backbenchers.

Corrie-listed means left-handed, and by extension Old Labour. A diddy-washer is a stupid person. A Davey Dumnit is someone who has claimed to do everything before, as in "the Davey Dumnits and diddy-washers on the Opposition benches may allege that it was they who increased the competitiveness of British industry."

Birlin is a Scots word which means spinning, and a boiler-maker is a disparaging term for a doctor, so a birlin boiler-maker is a spin doctor.

Broo is short for unemployment bureau, and so means Job Centre, as in the New Labour slogan "From broo to screw."

(The Scots also have several words for things which the English don't have any words for. Floaters are those little bits of food which get into a drink when you plug it straight from the bottle. A chaunty wasp is a man so considerate that he pees around the edge of a chamber pot, so as not to wake his partner.)

My favourite minister was taken on by my favourite backbencher, Michael Fabricant. This was a mistake. Fabricant began by saying offensively: "Before he begins his normal high-pitched tirade."

"...and Mr McCartney replied crossly: 'If he won't mention his hair, I won't mention his hair.'"

"But it's not his hair!" someone else yelled, to general mirth.

Growing in confidence if not in stature, Mr McCartney began to convert his answers into a music hall turn.

Asked if the minimum wage would destroy jobs, he replied: "Do you know of any country where there is a national minimum wage for hairdressing which has stopped people in that country from having a haircut?" — probably another dig at Fabricant, who never has to pay a hairdresser.

Then he was asked by Barbara Follett about co-operation in the workplace. Suddenly he was congratulating her on the birth of a grandchild — "a baby girl, weight six pounds eight ounces, and I will send her a bottle of best Californian red wine, called Redwood. It is very drinkable, unlike the Right Honourable Gentleman, who is not very eatable."

What was he on about? We began to worry. Could it be that he was turning a little hamper or doughnut or even doolie? These are very strong words.

The most disappointing moment came at question 14, which Nicholas Soames was not present to ask. You may recall that during a long, rambling speech on Wednesday, ostensibly about regional development, he touched on many other topics, including the beauty of the Financial Secretary, Dawn Primarolo, and the welfare of badgers.

"Wizee? Wizee?" demanded Labour. "Drying out," said someone. "Still at lunch," said another.

Mr Soames has assured us that he was not "bazooked", "grousebeasted", "lummied up", "well-refreshed", "stinked" or "slaughtered on the electric soup", and I for one believe him.

Next, Mo Mowlam made a statement about the inquiry into the various terrible events at the Maze prison, so reminding us of the old riddle: "What is the difference between the Maze prison and the Parliamentary Labour Party?"

Answer: "Prisoners in the Maze are allowed to run their own affairs."

Review

Holding a mirror up to desolation

Michael Billington

Uncle Vanya

Young Vic

HAVE measured out my life in Uncle Vanya: indeed two particular productions, by Laurence Olivier and Peter Stein, will haunt me to my grave. But even if Katie Mitchell's RSC/Young Vic co-production is not quite on the same exalted plane, it is still a treasure trove of memories likely to penetrate the memory for days afterwards.

David Lan, in the published introduction to his new version, makes a subtle point that whereas *The Seagull* belongs to the 19th-century theatre, in Uncle Vanya Chekhov was writing the first modern play. That strikes me as profoundly true, in that atmosphere prevails over incident. By the end all that has really happened is that Vanya and his niece, Sonya, have come face to face with the waste and desolation of their infinitely sad lives.

In Uncle Vanya, Chekhov discards melodrama; yet how beautifully he orchestrates the quotidian realities of life. And the great thing about Mitchell's production is that it combines minute attention to detail with rigorous sense of form.

As an example, one has only to look at its brilliant use of light, space and sound. In the first act we are constantly

reminded we are in a summer country garden by the buzzing flies and waist-high broom: by the last act, in Vanya's disordered bedroom-office, there is a sense of autumnal darkness and oil-lit gloom symbolising the shrunken hopes of the house's occupants.

Mitchell also has the confidence never to raise her voice: she allows us to eavesdrop, as it were on intimate conversations to often devastating effect. Only in the famous moment where Vanya tries to shoot the Professor does the production miss Chekhov's tragicomic momentum.

This is a rich, detailed production, blessed by some excellent performances. Stephen Dillane's Vanya is an angry obsessive who sees everywhere a mockery of his own wasted potential. Anastasia Hille's Yelena likewise seems torn apart by her awareness of her own futility. Like all the best Sonyas, Jo McInnes makes you feel that Astrov, in rejecting her, is ruling his own chance of happiness, and Linus Roache makes Astrov himself a quietly sensitive man alert to the destructiveness of idleness.

But perhaps the real quality of the production lies in the feeling you have seen less a piece of drama than a mirror held up, with breathtaking accuracy, to nature itself.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Linking salaries to pupils' performance would raise standards of profession, claims Margaret Hodge

'Pay teachers by results'

Vivek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

TEACHERS' pay should be linked to how well their pupils perform in class and how their schools fare in government inspections, a conference of primary school headteachers was told yesterday.

Labour MP Margaret Hodge, chair of the Commons education select committee, claimed that linking teachers' pay to their pupils' academic improvement would motivate and help teachers working in

schools which finish in a low league table position. Ms Hodge also called for a raising of the entry requirements for teacher training, claiming that many colleges were bumpy to admit trainees with poor A level grades.

Ms Hodge said: "Pay scales still reward time serving and administration rather than class performance and teaching competence. Too often promotion takes excellent teachers out of the classroom."

"If teaching is to be seen as a top class profession, it must look like one. I would like to see all teachers paid according to their performance, not

according to length of service. Annual increments could be replaced by increases based on annual appraisal, inspection findings, and pupils' improvement."

Ms Hodge, addressing the National Primary Congress in Oxford, said that her idea was not intended to benefit teachers working with bright pupils who gain high grades in schools that traditionally do well.

She said this would benefit teachers with improving pupils, whatever grades they might attain.

A teacher working in a difficult school is bound to do

better under performance-related pay than a teacher coasting along in a school that traditionally does well.

"This is about improving the performance of pupils and putting them at the centre of the education debate."

"We need to offer incentives and reward excellence, and I am convinced that the status of the teaching profession will rise with performance-related pay. At the moment, it's a profession that not many people are choosing."

Ms Hodge told the conference that the existing pay structure needed changing to

save the future of the teaching profession. She also called for fast-track entry for the brightest graduates and for the loans of teacher trainees to be paid by the government on a sliding scale for each year they spend in the classroom.

She said: "There is no logical reason why a teacher who performs better than a more experienced colleague should be paid less."

Teaching unions were quick to dismiss her suggestion for performance-related pay.

Nigel de Gruchy, of the NASUWT, said: "Ms Hodge can

have as many bright ideas as she wants but we totally reject performance-related pay."

"She is determined to make a name for herself and she is fast becoming a thorn in the side of teachers. Last time it was teachers' holidays and now she is trying to interfere with teachers' pay."

The National Union of Teachers said: "A child's development depends on the work of many teachers, not solely on the efforts of one. Performance-related pay is divisive and Ms Hodge should realise the reality of teamwork in schools."



Palestinians carry the charred body of Muhi al-Din Sharrif, Hamas's chief bomb-maker, at his funeral in Ramallah yesterday, where mourners vowed revenge. PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK BOWMAN

Mystery deepens over Hamas death

David Sharrock in Ramallah

IT WAS a state funeral of sorts, above which hovered the promise of more deaths. Faisal Hussein, the veteran Fatah activist and Palestinian chief of Jerusalem affairs, was there to pay his last respects to the charred body of Muhi al-Din Sharrif as it was borne aloft from mosque to political rally to graveyard.

Thousands of Hamas supporters, from middle-aged women in headscarves to wild-eyed teenagers, roared their message of revenge on Israel as the makeshift bier wound its way through Ramallah, on the West Bank.

"Vengeance, Qassam brigades! We want our revenge! God is great!" came the cry. "Dear Qassam hit Tel Aviv!"

Until last Sunday evening, when an explosion ripped through a bomb-making factory in the town, Sharrif had been a West Bank commander of the Izz el-Din al-Qassam, the military wing of the Islamist Hamas party.

The prayers at the mosque commemorated the soul of the "martyr" to paradise and called on God "to help us in killing our enemies and getting back our land". The damage to Sharrif's body was disguised by a thick green and white blanket, but his face bore ashen scorch marks. The crowd surged towards him.

"I have always been neutral but now Hamas are the only party that expresses what I feel," said one young man, Saif al-Deen. "I used to be on the streets to cheer Yasser Arafat. Now I wouldn't go out for a million dollars."

The mystery of Sharrif's death seemed only to deepen yesterday. The Palestinian Authority (PA) appeared to blame Hamas for the loss of its chief bomb-maker, suggesting in a statement that whoever killed him was probably told of his whereabouts by Hamas informers.

Marwan Barghouti, the leader of Mr Arafat's Fatah faction, said the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, could have planned Sharrif's murder "in order to have an excuse not to implement the [peace] agreements".

The chief of Israel's police bomb squad, Menachem Bosma, who examined the site of the Ramallah

explosion, disputed the Palestinian claims. He told Israel radio the garage in which Sharrif was killed was a Hamas bomb factory. He said the main blast in the garage triggered a smaller one in a car, believed to be in preparation for an attack on Jerusalem. Mr Bosma said he found no sign the explosives were set off by remote control.

But the question of who was responsible for Sharrif's death may become academic as Hamas activists distributed leaflets among the mourners.

"This crime will not pass: Netanyahu, you must pay the price," the leaflet said. "You paid 60 coffins for Ayash [a master bomber assassinated by the Israelis], prepare yourself — the war is coming."

But when a rally organiser said Sahar Habash, the Fatah

Revolutionary Council member, would address the mourners on behalf of the PA, a huge cry of "Bring forward the brigades of Qassam!" arose, and Mr Habash murmured from speaking.

"We want to bear explosions in Tel Aviv. Blow them up, blow them up," a group of women chanted, slapping their faces in grief.

Sharrif's body was buried in the Shuhada (martyrs) cemetery, overlooked by the small Jewish settlement of Psagot.

Israeli warplanes and artillery attacked southern Lebanon yesterday, killing a farmer a day after the Israeli government endorsed a United Nations resolution calling for its withdrawal and an end to military operations.

Lebanon and Syria have rejected the Israeli offer of a conditional withdrawal.

Court bars Le Pen from public office

Paul Webster in Versailles

JEAN-MARIE Le Pen, founder of the French National Front, was yesterday barred by a Versailles court from holding or seeking public office for two years after being found guilty of attacking a woman Socialist candidate during the 1997 elections.

Mr Le Pen, aged 69, is struggling to maintain control of the racist movement he founded 25 years ago against the rising power of his deputy, Bruno Mégret, the taciturn ally with the National Front's alliance with the mainstream right during last month's regional elections.

The Versailles judge also imposed a three-year suspended prison sentence and a £2,000 fine on Mr Le Pen for violence and public insult against Annette Pleuvast-Bergé, who won a parliamentary seat in the Mantes-la-Jolie constituency, west of Paris, last year.

The National Front leader was campaigning in the same street as the Socialist team when he led his bodyguards in a scuffle around Ms Pleuvast-Bergé.

Television pictures showed Mr Le Pen, who led an army of thugs during the Algerian war, pushing the Socialist candidate against a wall, while shouting and trying to pull a scarf from her neck.

Last week, Mr Le Pen unsuccessfully tried to become president of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur regional assembly in Marseille, but mainstream rightwing councillors preferred the Socialist nominee, Michel Vauzelle.

The attack on the Socialist candidate was characteristic

of Mr Le Pen's crude style of campaigning, that has kept the National Front on the political sidelines. Mr Mégret intends to exploit doubts over Mr Le Pen's attraction to the rightwings middle-class electorate to enforce less aggressive policies, based on electoral pacts with the Gaullists and centre right.

Mr Le Pen was not in court yesterday, but intends to appeal.



Jean-Marie Le Pen: two-year ban and fine

There's thrilling... and then there's

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IN BOOKSHOPS NOW

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Road rage verdict



The victims... Karen Martin and Toby Exley, who died after their car was hit by Humble's

12 years for car criminal who claimed two lives

Rory Carroll

THE rally driver who killed a young couple by ramming their car across a dual carriageway was yesterday sentenced to 12 years in jail in one of Britain's first road rage manslaughter convictions.

Jason Humble, 33, was a career car criminal with 24 previous convictions, including reckless driving, theft, damage and actual bodily harm against a motorist.

The night when he took revenge on Toby Exley, 22, and Karen Martin, 20, because they drove too slowly, was the culmination of his obsession with speed.

Humble hit their Ford Fiesta three times and sped away as it crashed through a wooden barrier into an oncoming vehicle. They died instantly from multiple injuries.

Six days later, Humble, hiding from police, competed in a high-performance car contest. The Old Bailey jury of eight women and four men took three hours to return a 10-2 majority verdict.

Sir Lawrence Verney, the Recorder of London, told him: "You used your car in a most aggressive way in order to push out of your path another vehicle. Conduct of this kind

falls outside the normal limits of sentencing, and you deserve and must receive a sentence very much greater than would have been imposed by causing death by dangerous driving."

Humble, from Farnborough, Hampshire, had served three jail terms for theft and handling stolen cars. He had been disqualified from driving several times and fined for reckless driving after overtaking a bus on double white lines.

But his last offence, in December last year, was possession of heroin and cannabis for which he was fined £250.

Having learned to drive at 17 and had 15 years experience of rally driving, Humble was said in court to be able to do things with cars that other drivers could not.

He told arresting police that on the A316 on October 6 last year, Mr Exley drove like "a prat" and hogged the fast lane, preventing him overtaking in his high-powered white Vauxhall Senator.

"He was only doing 35 in a 40mph zone, making me wait. I dropped back and sat behind him for quite a distance and flashed him once or twice."

Humble shunted Mr Exley's black Ford Fiesta three times in the rear. It crashed through a wooden central reservation at Hanworth, west London, into the path of an oncoming car.

Humble claimed he panicked after the incident. He parked the Senator in a road away from his home. It belonged to a friend, who later reported it stolen.

Watched by relatives of the dead couple, Humble showed no emotion as he was led to the cells. He will not be considered for parole until he has served at least half of the 12-year term.

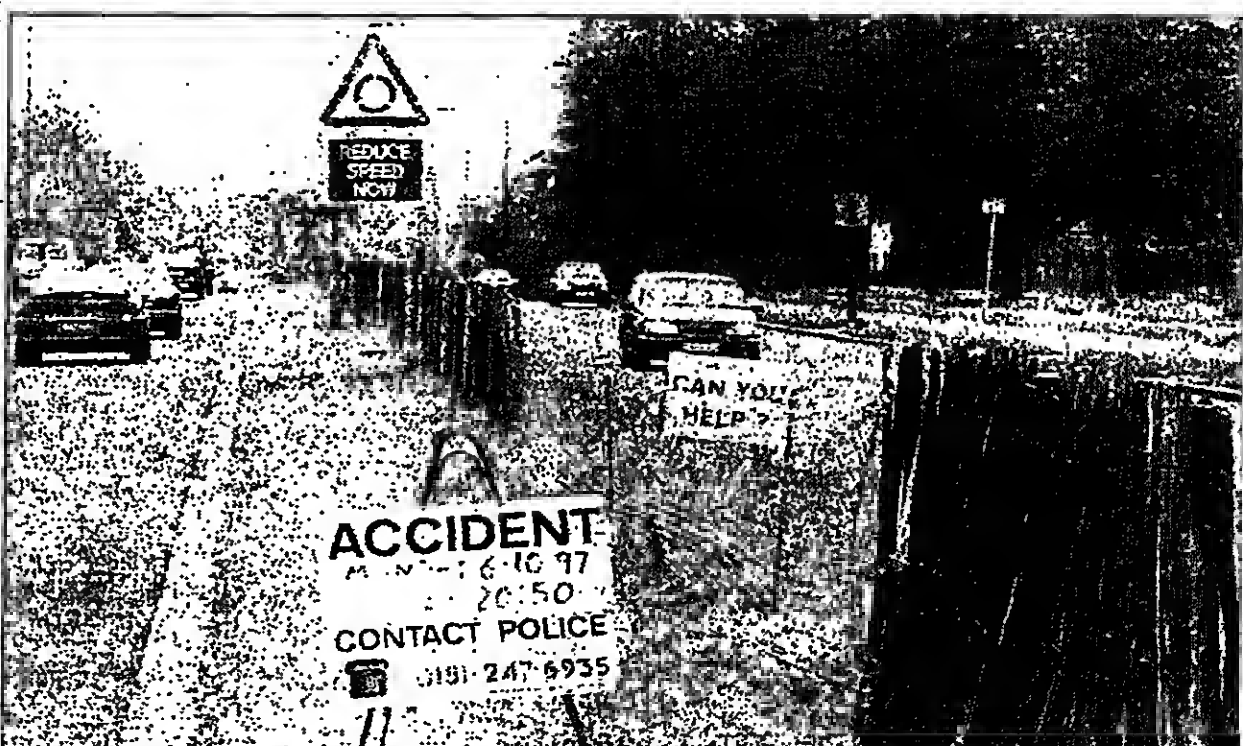
Humble was also disqualified from driving for 10 years and ordered to take an extended driving test before he can go back on the road.

Ms Martin's father, John Martin, said: "This has been a traumatic week for us." Mr Martin thanked the man who had headed the inquiry, Detective Chief Inspector Norman McKinley.

Asked his opinion of Humble, Mr Martin said in a faltering voice: "He is not worth mentioning."



Jason Humble, the rally driver who had a string of previous convictions



Scene of the crime... the spot on the A318 at Hanworth, west London, where the attack happened PHOTOGRAPH: TIM OCKENDEN

At the wheel and out of control

THE name given to Jason Humble's lethal flash of anger may be relatively new but the crime was not. Road rage is an animalistic impulse which humans have carried into cars since the 1920s, writes Rory Carroll.

If the phenomenon is becoming more frequent and serious, it is because we are now jammed bumper to bumper.

We see our cars as an extension of our personal space, and like animals we defend that space when we feel it threatened, according to Peter Marsh, a psychologist for the independent company MCM Research.

"People in a car have one of those rare opportunities in their lives for total self-determination. You decide how fast you are going to go, whether you will play loud music."

An AA spokesman said studies of animal behaviour showed rats and various primates responding aggressively in response to overcrowding, a pattern repeated in humans struggling to preserve personal space as streets become more crowded.

An AA survey found that 90 per cent of motorists had experienced road rage during the previous 12 months. More than 60 per cent said they had suffered aggressive tailgating (a car too close behind them) but only 6 per cent admitted doing it themselves.

The RAC said: "Once inside your car, you are closed to the outside world, away from human contact, so you are liable to be much more aggressive."

Around five people are killed every year in accidents related to road rage, according to Matthew Joint, at the AA's drivers' behaviour unit. The most likely culprits are males under 35.

But the chances of being killed in a road rage attack are one in 9.5 million, compared with the one in 15,500 chance of dying in a road traffic accident, said the AA.

Two years ago the Lex Report on Motoring found that up to three-quarters of drivers had been victims of some sort of road rage. There were 1.8 million cases of drivers forced to swerve or pull off the road by other motorists, and 250,000 people had been physically attacked.

The term road rage was invented by the Los Angeles Times 14 years ago to describe the violence meted out by a pick-up driver, who shot dead a Cadillac driver after being cut up on the freeway.

Man who jailed Deirdre steps aside

Coronation Street producer quits TV's high pressure job

Kenneth Ahmed
Media Correspondent

BRIAN Park, the man who put Deirdre in jail, gave Derek Wilton a heart attack and axed his wife, Mavis, is to quit as the producer of Coronation Street after just 15 months in the job.

Mr Park, who was criticised for bringing more sex and violence to the Street, said it was time to find new challenges after turning the soap opera from a struggling also-ran against EastEnders into Britain's most popular television programme.

Although he is unlikely to leave until the autumn, Mr Park said the search for a suc-

cessor had already begun. The producer of the Street, the person who has the last word on storylines and characters, is thought to be one of the most pressurised and high profile people in television.

"Producing Coronation Street is like being astride a huge beast," Mr Park said. "I feel that I have achieved what I came here to do and it is time for some new blood."

"I always said that I thought someone could do this job for a maximum of two years. It takes over your life."

Sources at the programme, which is made in Manchester by Granada, expressed surprise that Mr Park had announced his move as the programme was enjoying such



Brian Park: 'The job is like being astride a huge beast'

success. He oversaw an increase in viewing figures from 13 million to more than 18 million. Over 19 million viewers tuned in last week to see Deirdre Barlow, formerly Deirdre Barlow, sent to prison for a fraud she did not commit.

During Mr Park's tenure Derek and Mavis Wilton, Nicky Platt, Don Brennan, the mad taxi driver, and Margaret Holdsworth, the clucking shop assistant, were all axed. He brought in younger, streetwise characters such as Tina Hobley and Matthew Marsden who quickly became newspaper pin-up material.

"The public's and the press's perception at the time I took over was that Coronation Street had had its day, an anachronism pickled in aspic. I wanted to give it some more punch," he said.

Mr Park has turned down offers from the BBC and independent production companies and now plans to set up his own production company with Ann McManus, Coronation Street's script editor, who is also leaving the programme. He said he was working on a number of drama ideas.

Mainland car bomb plot foiled

continued from page 1

place tomorrow. The IRA, which had then still to restore its ceasefire, disrupted the race meeting last year with an elaborate bomb hoax.

The development came as the multi-party negotiations in Northern Ireland appeared stymied, with Bertie Ahern, Irish Prime Minister, digging his heels in over cross-border institutions, the crucial issue.

Mr Ahern, who was meeting Tony Blair again last night, said: "The Irish government will not be moving any further. What we need is for the other parties to make those moves. I hope Mr Blair can use his influence on those other parties."

Mr Ahern said he believed the Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM), convening in London last night and opening today just 300 yards from the Houses of Parliament with the leaders of 25 nations in

attendance, could have been the intended target of a bomb.

Police in Donaghadee arrested five people, three of them with addresses in Britain, in two BMW cars which arrived for the early morning Stena line sailing. The home-made explosives device in the first car, Irish-registered, was fitted with a detonator, ready for use. One man, from Co Kildare, is expected to be charged.

Superintendent Pat Cullen, leading the investigation, said: "It would have caused massive damage and probably loss of life if it had gone off." He said there had been no tip-off.

But the Garda's record this year in intercepting devices indicates an excellent intelligence flow, and security sources suggested yesterday that those held had been under surveillance for a week.

The first car had arrived at the ferry port at 2.30am, and taken up its position at the head of a lane. The second BMW, with English plates, later took up its position behind it.

The two men and two women in it were later released, with police satisfied they had nothing to do with the incident.

Members of the emergency response unit, armed with machine-guns, moved in at 6am, 40 minutes before the ferry was due to sail. They dragged the driver from the red BMW.

Mary Harney, deputy prime minister, praised the Irish police. "This could have had catastrophic effects on human life, on property and on the Northern Ireland peace process," she said.

Although the new break-away group is suspected because Donaghadee is close to its stronghold in Co Louth, another possibility is that the Continuity IRA was responsible. It also involves dissident IRA members, and has been responsible for a number of attacks in Northern Ireland.

At Stormont, the parties will today receive talks chairman George Mitchell's best guess at a settlement. Mr Mitchell, who has set next Thursday as the deadline for a settlement, hopes his "synthesis" will help to concentrate minds and free parties to compromise on their negotiated positions.

David Andrews, the Irish foreign minister, was seeking to play down talks of a rift between Dublin and Westminster. He thought the difference could be resolved, but David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, is suggesting the deadline is too ambitious.

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An Irish bomb disposal team at work on two BMW cars intercepted at the port of Dun Laoghaire yesterday. Nearly 1,000lb of explosives with a timer were found in one car. Of five people arrested, four were later released. PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN COOKE

Maze management exonerated over Wright murder

John Mullan
Ireland Correspondent

MARTIN NAREY, the Northern Ireland Secretary, yesterday ruled out fundamental changes to the regime at the Maze prison after a government inquiry exonerated senior management of any blame over the murder of loyalist terrorist Billy Wright.

Martin Narey, director of prison regimes in England and Wales, was unable to discover how the guns which killed Wright got to the hands of the maverick Loyalist Volunteer Force, he was smuggled into the jail. He was shot dead two days after Christmas, starting a spate of sectarian murders throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr Narey also investigating the escape 17 days earlier of IRA double murderer Liam

Averill, 32, blamed middle management over its organisation of the Christmas party from which he escaped. He spoke of general disapproval and said procedures were "fatally flawed".

Mr Narey made 59 recommendations, mainly relating to the searching of prisoners and officers. Unionists said they failed to address the crux of the problems at the Maze, appeasement of prisoners.

Since Mr Narey completed his report another inmate has been murdered. David Keys, 26, one of four suspects in the Poyntzpass shooting last month was killed in the cell on the LVF wing.

Defending the regime at the Maze, Mr Narey said it was a unique prison housing 500 paramilitary inmates. It could not be run like any other top security jail. He blamed the media for running "damaging publicity".

Mr Narey said: "Not infrequently the Maze is caricatured as a holiday camp. It is nothing of the sort. It is a prison, which, while tolerating relatively high levels of prisoner freedom on the wings, had for 14 years an enviable security record."

Ms Mowlem told the Commons: "The report suggests that the shortcomings cannot be attributed to individuals but are the result of slow and long-running deterioration caused by staff fears of the consequences of managing paramilitary prisoners."

Terrorists have killed 29 prison officers since the beginning of the troubles. There were 122 threats issued last year alone. Two devices have exploded outside officers' homes in the past week.

One in 10 officers is on sick leave. A big incident increases absenteeism among the 1,200 staff, a senior official said.

Mr Narey's report was un-

able to say whether a prison officer was in the security tower overlooking the spot where Wright was shot by Irish National Liberation Army gunmen. The officer said he was withdrawn from the tower at H-block 6, and then insisted on returning.

The report was unable to draw conclusions about whether the tower had been left empty, but says it would probably not have stopped Wright's murder. It also

recommends that officers stop manning the towers and rely on cameras for surveillance instead.

Ms Mowlem said changes were already in place, including full block searches on a "random" basis, security checks of all H-block fences, and new arrangements for weekend coverage of staffing shortfalls on visits, searching prisoners on visits and X-raying their parcels, and counting visitors at parties.

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'Peace' wall augurs ill for talks breakthrough

John Mullan

TODAY workers will move into north Belfast to build the first peace line in Northern Ireland for three years: a £150,000 wall to separate warring Catholics and Protestants in the Whitehall Road area.

A concrete example of division, it should cause politicians ensconced at Stormont to redouble their efforts to reach a deal as the deadline of April 9 fast approaches.

But posturing seems to be the key feature of negotiations, as Tony Blair's telephone diplomacy inside Castle Buildings vies with the megaphone approach at press conferences outside.

Many of this week's disagreements are to be expected, with the parties desperately awaiting the blueprint for a settlement from George Mitchell, the talks chairman. It will take the pressure off them, and should allow the real negotiations to begin.

The parties — apart from Sinn Féin, which joined last September — have been talking since June 1996. But dealing has hardly been the hallmark. A deadline was essential to concentrate minds.



At home in Liberia
Christopher Wreh played for a side who considered themselves so quick, so skilful and so utterly elusive that they went under the magnificent name of the Invisible XI.

Sport98
page 4

Unionists' ire over articles two and three of the republic's constitution is fundamental. There will be no deal unless Unionists get that territorial claim removed, and 29 drafts have failed to break the deadlock.

The constitutional issue strikes at the heart of Flanna Fail, party of Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach. Its origins lie in the civil war and opposition to partition.

He feels David Trimble's Ulster Unionists have been getting their way for too long. His frustration boiled over in his outburst before meeting Mr Blair on Wednesday.

He has another problem. His coalition has a majority of one — and that is including the votes of three independent TDs (Irish MPs).

One, Harry Blaney, is furious about the proposed dilution of commitment to Irish unity. Others within Flanna Fail are unhappy, and Mr Ahern's comments are designed to reassure them.

He is prepared to see the

amendments diluted simply to take account of nationalist aspirations of unity, but he needs something in return. That is the crux of the Stormont impasse: north-south bodies.

The Irish want them to be strong, with functions "not unlike those of a government", as David Andrews, Irish foreign minister, controversially stated four months ago. The Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Féin agree.

The word "executive" is at the centre of all of this. Ulster Unionists celebrated the Propositions on Heads of Agreement, the paper the two governments published in January, because it removed the term "executive power" from their 1995 Framework Document's description of the bodies' putative functions.

The SDLP can buy the fudge over the word, as long as there is none over the powers. A week to go, and it seems nobody agrees on very much. Tough days ahead.



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Councils urged to undertake better inspections of restaurants

Health watchdogs warn of undercooked burgers

James Melkie

BURGER eaters in fast food restaurants were warned yesterday to send back undercooked food to reduce the risk of food poisoning. The Public Health Laboratory Service said people should not eat burgers that were pink in the middle and should beware of cold meats after researchers linked cases of infection from the virulent bacterium *E. coli* 157 to eating out.

PHLS scientists investigating 85 cases of people falling ill over two years found eating burgers from restaurants was a significant factor. Of 19 cases where people recalled eating burgers, 14 involved commercial premises including restaurants, bars and burger vans.

Among them was an unnamed national fast-food chain. But McDonald's was praised for its cooking method — grilling burgers on the top and bottom simultaneously. Cooked sliced meat from supermarkets, delicatessen and other outlets were linked with a further 39 cases.

In 58 cases people said they had eaten out before falling sick. Farm visits and contacts with cattle also seemed to raise the risks of infection.

The researchers, headed by Roland Salmon, of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Unit in Cardiff, concentrated on Wales and the border counties for the study published in the *Lancet* medical journal.

They called for better inspection of food outlets by local councils and a health education campaign.

A PHLS spokesman in London said: "The key message is that people who eat out should be prepared to send back undercooked burgers and ones that are pink in the middle. Also, people should be careful of salad bars with cold meats."

"If you buy cold cooked meat from a butcher, there doesn't seem to be a risk. But visitors to farms have got to be careful because there are instances of person to person and animal to human transmission."

Ministry bows to further BSE research after farmer's efforts

ASOMERSET farmer has triumphed in his 10 year battle to get extra government research into organophosphates and whether their use on cattle parasites helped trigger BSE, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, writes James Melkie.

Mark Purdey's campaign, backed by MPs of all parties and promising results from a £14,000 pilot study partly funded by the public, has finally persuaded the Ministry of Agriculture to consider commissioning further work.

The ministry previously denied evidence of a link between pesticides and the cow disease.

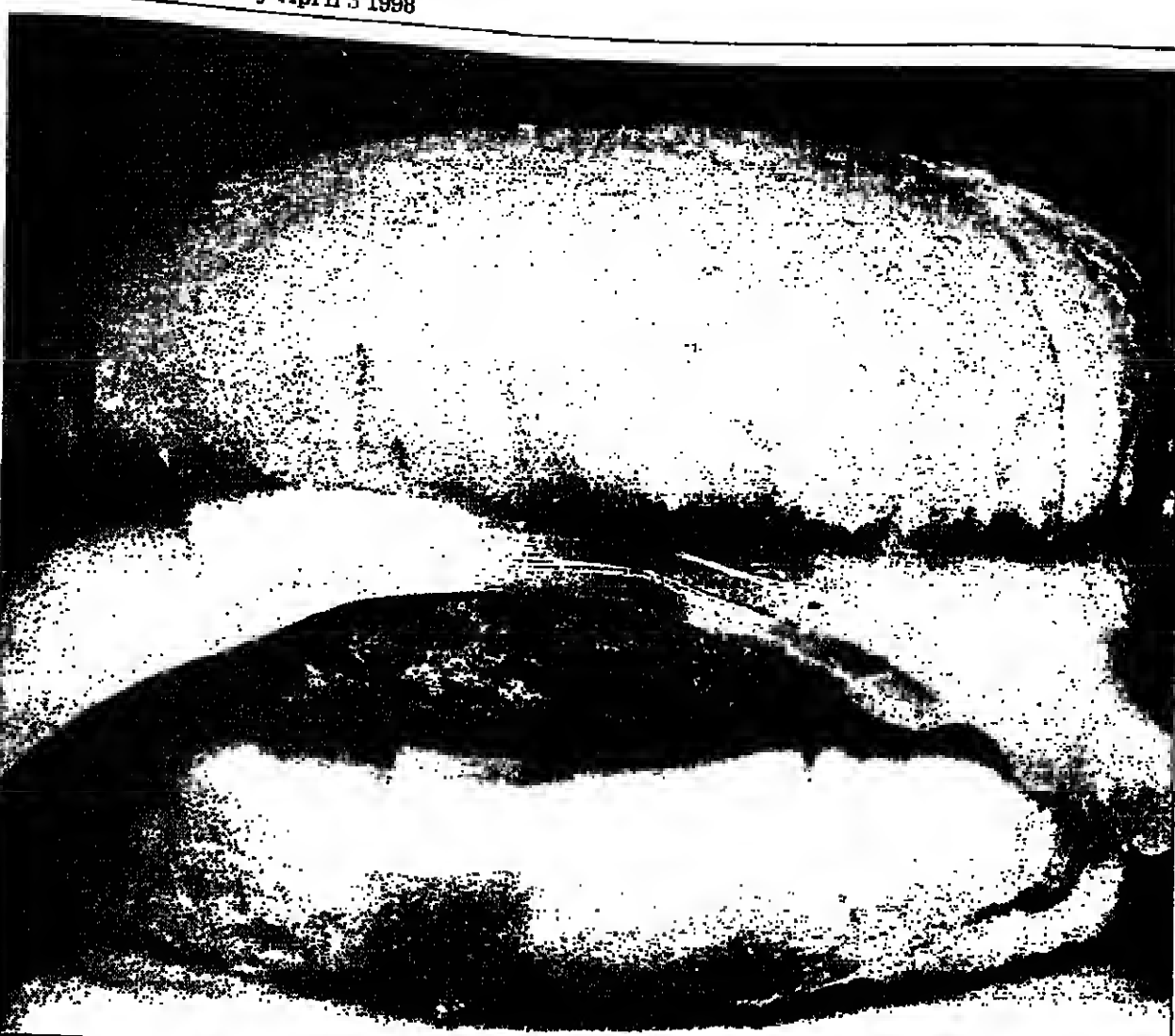
Mr Purdey, aged 44, from Taunton, is convinced that treatment used to banish the warble fly, a pest suffered by cows, was a prime factor in causing the cattle disease.

The apparent change in attitude became public after Mr Purdey's appearance at the BSE inquiry yesterday.

Malcolm Ferguson-Smith, of Cambridge university, a professor and member of the inquiry panel, said he thought more research ought to be done into aspects of the organophosphate (OP) arguments.

The Government's BSE advisers have asked other specialist committees to read unpublished results from the Institute of Psychiatry in London, which indicate that OPs may alter cell structure and that they have contributed to a new strain of so-called prion protein disease which is found in BSE and its human equivalent, new variant CJD.

A well-supported theory among the scientific and veterinary establishment is that the BSE epidemic is rooted in cattle feed used during the 1980s.



An undercooked burger should be sent back, says the Public Health Laboratory Service

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

News in brief

Hope for end to jail dispute

UNION and prison chiefs at Wormwood Scrubs jail were hoping last night that more staff would return to work today, after a deal was agreed over increased staffing. Yesterday 91 warders called in sick, said a Prison Officers' Association official. On Wednesday 100 stayed at home.

The west London prison is at the centre of a police inquiry into complaints of staff brutality towards inmates. Eight officers and a senior manager have been suspended pending the conclusion of the criminal investigation.

John Sutcliffe, POA assistant secretary, said: "Now that the deal has been agreed, we are looking forward to staff returning to work."

Girls face DNA tests

POLICE hunting the killer of a new-born baby are to carry out DNA tests on girls absent from school on the day he was found. They are writing to the parents of about 100 schoolgirls in Warrington, Cheshire, asking for permission to carry out the tests.

The baby boy's body was found in a bin bag three weeks ago in a wood near the town. He had been strangled within two hours of birth.

Three schools have co-operated with identifying girls absent on the day. Girls as young as 12 will be tested.

Police are hunting two men aged about 18, one of them carrying a bin liner, seen near where the body was found.

Vitamin B6 sales curb

JEFF Rooker, the food safety minister, yesterday announced plans to restrict sale of the popular health and diet supplement vitamin B6 despite strong protests from

more than 200 doctors and scientists, and MPs. Only supplements containing a daily dose of up to 10mg will be freely available.

MPs on the Commons select committee on agriculture are to hold an inquiry into the plans to restrict sales.

Mr Rooker accused the food industry of resisting proposals to cut the risk of side effects because it could not prove it had significant health benefits. — David Hencke

Sex crimes up in Scotland

SEX crime recorded by Scottish police forces jumped by more than a quarter in one year, according to figures released yesterday by the Government. Scotland's eight forces recorded 7,147 sex crimes in 1997, an increase of 1,471 on the previous year.

Within this category, the percentage of cases of rape, and assault with intent to rape rose from 599 cases in 1996 to 739 last year.

Scottish home affairs minister Henry McLeish said he was keen to see the results of a pilot exercise to collate more detailed statistics on the volume and type of sex crimes committed against children.

Pensioner 'not bomber'

A PENSIONER being questioned by police over firearms offences has been ruled out as having any connection with the three-year Mardi Gras bomb campaign.

The man, in his late 60s, was arrested last night near a Sainsbury supermarket, in South Ruislip, west London, following a police chase.

The man made off in a car after officers noticed him acting suspiciously. Scotland Yard confirmed that officers found a handgun and are continuing to question the man.

A controlled explosion was carried out on a suspect package near the store, but it turned out to be an empty box.

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Genocide survivors left to face killers, report says

French abandoned wounded Tutsis

Victoria Brittain

THE fourth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda will be marked next week at Bisesero, where new evidence shows that Tutsi survivors fought hand-to-hand battles against Hutu extremists led by local officials and businessmen for 10 weeks.

The survivors' testimony also reveals how French soldiers drove away, leaving wounded and starving Tutsis at the mercy of these killers. The failure of the international community to prevent the genocide was acknowledged last week in President Bill Clinton's apology to survivors.

The flood of new information coming out for this anniversary, mainly from French journalists and academics, is

plane were Iraqi armaments which had been seized by the French army in the Gulf war. Patrick de Saint-Exupéry is Le Figaro's expert on Rwanda. His earlier disclosures led to a parliamentary investigation which is now under way into France's role in the supply of arms to the extremist regime for at least a month after the genocide started.

His report this week said that the families of the three crew, who were retired French air force personnel, had run into a "stone wall" trying to find out about their deaths.

Jacques Heraud, Jean-Pierre Minaberry and Jean-Michel Perrine officially worked for a private air company but were posthumously decorated as chevaliers de la Légion d'honneur by the French government.

saw French soldiers driving past Bisesero. They asked the soldiers to save them. But the soldiers drove on, saying they would be back in three days — during which time half the survivors were killed.

Further deepening the mystery about the French role in the events, yesterday's Le Monde quoted a French priest working in Rwanda as saying that witnesses had seen whites firing the missiles at the presidential plane.

It also reported from the Belgian senate's inquiry into the genocide that as early as 1992 the Belgian authorities knew the extermination of the Tutsis was being planned by a secret military unit.

In January 1994 — three months before it began — the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations was warned by its own military unit in Rwanda that the training and planning for killing Tutsis at the rate of 1,000 in 20 minutes was complete. No action was taken.

The head of that department was the present UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan. Bisesero's hills are still covered with bones and skulls. The killings there and the survivors have a unique place in the history of the genocide. The African Rights' report describes the heroism of the 50,000 people who fought for their lives on these hills until 1,000 emaciated survivors remained. Many can no longer bear to live there.

The key organisers of Bisesero's genocide fled abroad; most have been indicted by the UN Tribunal at Arusha, but three have been arrested.

● Militiamen armed with knives killed nine Hutus in three villages in central Rwanda, the private Rwanda News Agency reported yesterday. A local government official blamed the attack, which took place on Monday in villages of the Nyabikenge commune, on Hutu militiamen who hide-out in forest bases.

Hutu rebels stepped up their campaign against the country's Tutsi-dominated army in December, killing about 270 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have since attacked military and civilian targets mainly in the north-west.

"The militiamen no longer target the sole genocide survivors. These days they more and more hit ethnic Hutus they accuse of collaborating with the government," a Nyabikenge resident said.



HILLARY and Bill Clinton look out of the "Door of No Return" at the Slave House on Gorée island, Senegal. The president ended his African tour yesterday with the visit to the windswept island off the capital, Dakar, the continent's best-

known monument to at least 20 million Africans who were shipped to the Americas. The Clintons spent about two minutes standing in the doorway, through which many slaves passed. The rhythm of African drums accompanied their visit.

Before crossing to the island, Mr Clinton met African political activists who briefed him on human rights in their countries. He also visited Dakar's main mosque as a gesture of respect to Islam's role in the former French colony.

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL A. FICHAWOS

Accusers warn Clinton they will fight on

Martin Kettle in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton's accusers, struggling to put a brave face on the collapse of the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit, fought back yesterday, insisting that the legal challenges dogging his presidency are far from over.

Mr Clinton paused at the end of his 12-day African tour to offer a brief and calculatedly subdued welcome to Judge Susan Webber Wright's surprise decision on Wednesday to throw out the Jones suit.

"Obviously I'm pleased with this decision. The judge's ruling speaks for itself," he said, before continuing with his visit to Senegal and his return to Washington.

The president's low-key comments belied the mood behind the scenes in the touring party, which sources described as "overjoyed". A television camera caught a glimpse of Mr Clinton grinning in his Dakar hotel room, chewing on a cigar and beating an African drum.

With an apparently "tearful" Mrs Jones maintaining a media silence in Los Angeles, her spokeswoman, Susan Carpenter McMillan, said it was "99 per cent certain" she would appeal against Judge Wright's ruling.

"I don't think this is over until the 8th circuit appeals court rules," she said. "If that ruling stands, then you just have an open season on women here in this country for groping and grabbing." Mrs Jones's lawyers were meeting yesterday to plan their response.

But legal observers said an

legal bearing on his criminal investigations, Mr Starr said his was "not a political job" and that his team were "professionals gathering facts".

"The real issue is that we're examining whether crime was committed," he said. "The crimes that we have been charged with investigating are subornation of perjury, intimidation of witnesses and obstruction of justice. Those are very serious matters."

But Mr Starr showed he is conscious that the judge's decision has reshaped the battlefield in the accusations against Mr Clinton.

He said: "We're trying to do

"We recognise that there is a powerful interest in bringing all these matters to resolution quickly

It as quickly as we can, because we do recognise that there is a very keen and powerful interest in bringing all these matters to resolution as quickly as possible."

A poll taken by Gallup for USA Today and CNN on Wednesday showed Mr Clinton's position strengthening on all fronts, with 69 per cent of respondents saying Judge Wright's ruling was right, and the same proportion agreeing that it was "good for the country".

About 57 per cent said the investigations into Mr Clinton's alleged sexual misdeeds should now stop up from 61 per cent two weeks ago.

A senior White House adviser, Rahm Emanuel, said Mr Starr needed "to move and wrap this up quickly". But the Senate Republican majority leader, Trent Lott, said: "This won't affect Mr Starr's case."

In another warning sign that all is not over for Mr Clinton, the New York literary agent Lucianne Goldberg, who claims to have heard the so-called "Lewinsky tapes", announced that she will reveal full details of conversations between Mr Clinton and the former White House intern for the first time in a television interview on Sunday.

● Hillary Clinton warned yesterday that those fueling the White House sex scandal would fail. The president's wife, who has accused a "vast rightwing conspiracy" of trying to bring down her husband, said the judge had ruled correctly based on the facts, the evidence and the law.

"Both Bill and I have felt throughout this whole thing that it would turn out fine either at a trial or, more appropriately, as the judge ruled, based on the facts there was no evidence to support these groundless claims," she told American Urban Radio.

The more pressing threat comes in the form of the investigations by Kenneth Starr

appeal could take months and, even if it were successful which many believe is unlikely — the case would not come before the Arkansas courts until after Mr Clinton left the White House in January 2001.

The more pressing threat to the president comes in the form of the continuing investigations by the independent counsel Kenneth Starr. Mr Starr responded to the dismissal of the Jones case yesterday by subpoenaing the White House chief of staff, Erskine Bowles, to give evidence for the first time before the Washington grand jury that is considering the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Mr Starr gave an uncharacteristically long television interview as he left for work from his Virginia home. Stressing that the outcome of the Jones civil suit had no

Health directive: lottery bets may lead to addiction

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

FOR those who like a flutter just a bit too much, the country that proudly introduces warnings on alcohol and tobacco products will soon insist on an addiction warning on all gambling tickets.

The New South Wales government has announced that warning labels will be printed on all lottery tickets, racing cards and betting slips, covering such popular punts as Lotto, Keno and Footy.

The legislation will also force the operators of casinos, clubs and pubs to help problem gamblers, by setting up "detox" centres at hospitals and universities to try to cure them.

The gaming industry, which returns the NSW state government A\$1.3 billion (\$220 million) a year in revenues, welcomed the warning system, but some elements of the welfare lobby said it was a smoke-screen to cover the growth of gaming establishments.

The minister for grey ticks and racing, Richard Face, said a policy of "harm minimisation" would be introduced to make gaming providers more responsible for the growing number of problem gamblers. If they did not comply they would be in the same position as the alcohol and tobacco industries. "They will be under tremendous pressure to justify their own existence," he said.

"It's something the government sees as morally responsible and if we don't do something in the foreseeable future there are going to be people that'll be harmed."

A gaming consultant, John Beagle, said the industry would not object to the mandatory warnings to promote responsible gambling and demystify some of the glamour surrounding it.

"Anything that improves the awareness of gamblers to the problem is desirable," he said. But some in the welfare sector, who have objected to the opening of a major casino in Sydney and the proliferation of poker machines in pubs, said the move came too late, given the explosion of gambling opportunities.

It's long overdue and I have been asking for it for years," said Jim Connelly of Sydney's Wesley Gambling Counselling Services. "It is an acknowledgement there is a concern out there in the community."

The Australian Council on Problem Gambling said that while it welcomed the move it wanted an inquiry into the social effects of gambling and a moratorium on its further expansion. Mr Connelly said: "Gambling is no longer a recreation, it is a big multinational business and government are getting a big share of the revenue, mainly driven by treasury departments."

She will never ride a National winner but, the way she is going, she might just lead one back to her Eden. Paul Hayward on Venetia Williams

Sport98 page 8

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Papon verdict exposes French 'false truth'

Jon Henley in Bordeaux

SEVENTEEN years after his role in the mass deportation of French Jews was first revealed, Maurice Papon was convicted of complicity in crimes against humanity and sentenced to 10 years in prison yesterday.

The jury, which took nearly 19 hours to reach its verdict after the longest trial in French history, found the 67-year-old former Vichy official guilty of organising the arrest and detention of Jews during the second world war.

But it absolved him of any complicity in their deaths — accepting Papon's defence that he had not been aware of

the Nazi programme to exterminate the Jews.

Jewish organisations, which had demanded a life sentence, were disappointed with the verdict, but in the south-western city of Bordeaux it was greeted with relief by Holocaust survivors and victims' relatives.

"We've won," said Serge Klarsfeld, a leading representative of former deportees.

"This was a big man in France, a former police chief, an ex-cabinet minister, a man who enjoyed the protection of the French state for many years. France now knows that the soulless penpushers, too, will be held to account."

Standing in a steady drizzle outside the courthouse, Francis Pasteur, who lost seven

family members in the gas chambers, agreed the conviction was a lesson for the future.

"Now the young people will know," she said. "They'll know even a high and mighty man is not immune."

But Jean Kahn, head of France's central Jewish religious authority, the Israelite Consistory, said Papon had deserved "the exemplary punishment" of life imprisonment for not disobeying immoral orders.

And the CRIF, an umbrella group of Jewish associations, said that while the verdict showed the Vichy regime was guilty of deporting Jews to Nazi concentration camps, the sentence left a bitter taste.

"The lukewarm punishment

Only Vichy could part them

THE oldest couple in France, who celebrate their 80th wedding anniversary today, have only been separated once — by the Vichy regime.

Armand and Jeanne Girard of the west coast village of Luçon, both aged 99, were married on April 3 1918. They said yesterday

that they had only been apart in 1943, when Mr Girard, a resistance member, was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp.

"Our pride is that we refused to work with Vichy," he said. Their aim was to live to 2000, "so we can say we've lived through three centuries".

can only be explained by personal factors, like the defendant's age, his grief, or the state of his health," it said.

Papon, who is in poor health and last week lost his wife of 66 years to cancer, sat

motionless as the verdict was read out. The sentence was less than the 20 years the public prosecutor had asked for, but the jury of three judges and nine civilians also stripped Papon of his civic

rights for 10 years.

"He's become a non-person," Ms Pasteur said. "That's what gives me the most satisfaction. For a man who was so respected, so powerful, this is the ultimate humiliation. He may not serve a day of his prison sentence, but for me this is enough."

A well-regarded civil servant who rose to become Paris police chief and budget minister after the war, Papon will not go to prison until all his appeals are exhausted, which could take years. His lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, promised to take the case to France's highest court and if necessary to the European Court of Human Rights.

"This has not finished," he said on the courthouse steps.

"I think the jury was afraid of public opinion."

Papon, the most senior civil servant of the collaborationist Vichy regime to stand trial, was charged with ordering the arrests and deportation of 1,680 Jews — including 233 children — from the Bordeaux region where he was wartime Deputy prefect and head of the Jewish Affairs service.

He argued throughout the six-month trial that he was not helping the Nazis, and that he owed it to France to stay on in his post rather than resign. He also insisted that he knew nothing of Hitler's "Final Solution" for Jews.

The case came to light in 1981, but a succession of governments blocked his prosecution until last October. To many in France and outside, it was a litmus test of the country's capacity to acknowledge its collaboration with the Nazis, and its complicity in sending 76,000 French Jews to the death camps.

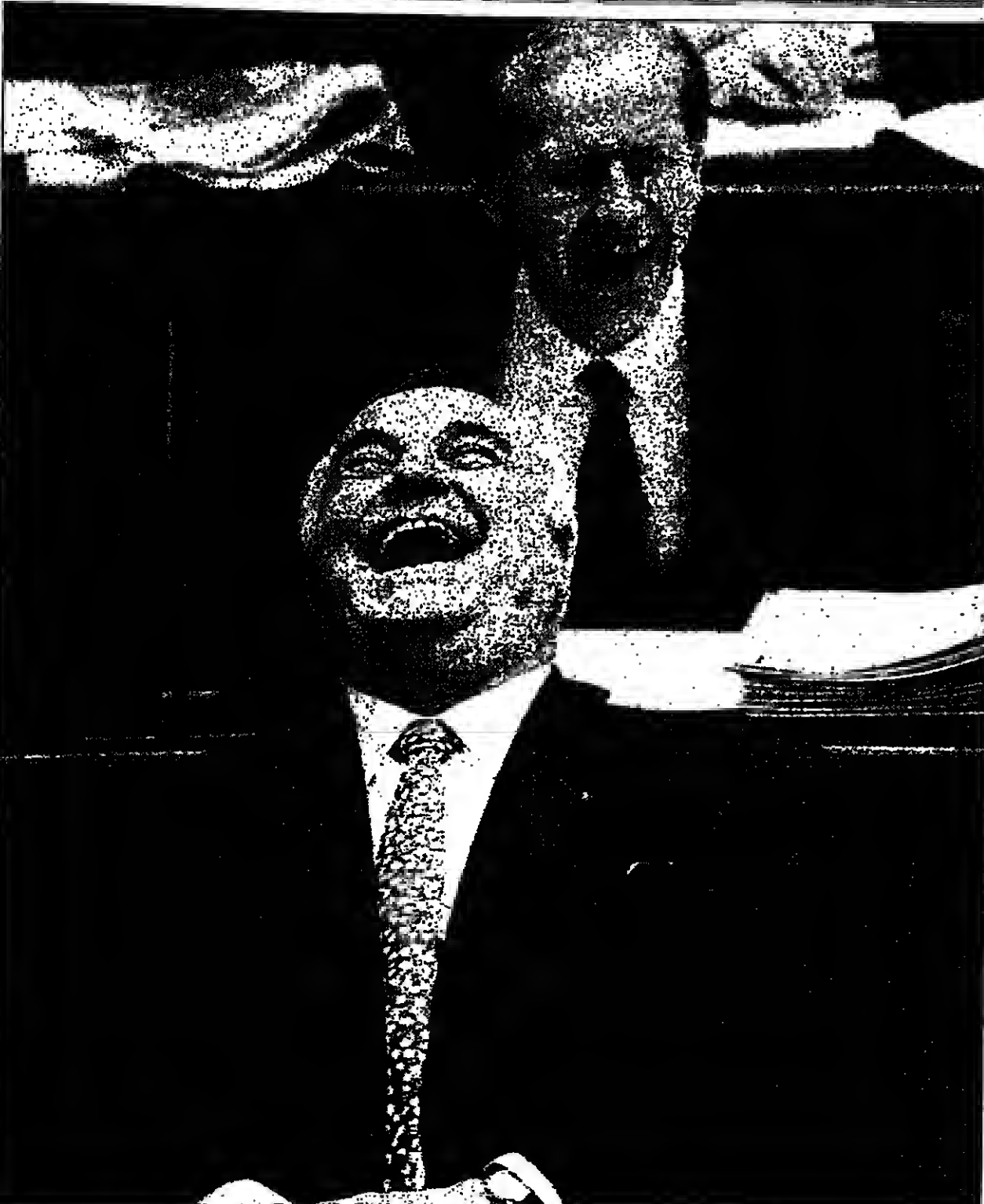
To Alain Jakubowicz, another lawyer for Holocaust survivors and relatives, the court ducked its responsibility by not handing down a life sentence. But, he said, "a page has turned in the history of our country".

He added: "We will no longer look at this period in the way we have, as a time when all Frenchmen were heroes. Those who wanted to oppose the truth, by fabricating a false truth, have been defeated."

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Chancellor Helmut Kohl roars with laughter during yesterday's parliamentary debate in Bonn on a bill to introduce the single currency. He declared the euro was 'above all in Germany's interest' PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERTO PIRELLA

German parliament embraces the euro

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANS took a large, if reluctant, step towards abolishing the mark and adopting the euro yesterday when the lower house of parliament passed a bill to introduce the single currency and the country's supreme court threw out Eurosceptic challenges demanding a delay in launching the euro.

A five-hour parliamentary debate in Bonn produced

overwhelming cross-party support for the euro, which the chancellor, Helmut Kohl, declared was "above all in Germany's interest".

The constitutional court in Karlsruhe, meanwhile, dismissed as "clearly unfounded" two complaints that the single currency would jeopardise price stability and therefore harm property values and rights.

Mr Kohl insisted that the euro would be launched on schedule next January and that it would be as stable and

strong as the mark. He described it as "the most important milestone in the process of Europe's unification".

Both chambers of parliament are to clear the way to the euro this month. The enthusiasm for it among the political class in Bonn is not, however, shared by the public, who are reluctant to forfeit the mark.

Although Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats and the opposition Social Democrats both strongly support the euro, the chancellor's challenger in

September's election, Gerhard Schröder, was a notable absentee from the debate.

Instead, he attacked Mr Kohl's European policies and talked up the fears and uncertainties associated with the single currency.

The country's most powerful Eurosceptic, Edmund Stoiber, the premier of Bavaria, has also grudgingly accepted the inevitability of the euro, but only because to reject it would have convulsed his party during an election campaign.

Turkish PM succumbs to pressure for early polls

Chris Morris and Reuters in Ankara

TURKEY'S prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, announced yesterday that his battered minority government would seek elections in 1999, more than a year before they are due.

"We have decided to present to parliament the view that a suitable date for a general election in 1999 should be set," said Mr Yilmaz, leader of the Motherland Party, after talks with his coalition allies.

Deniz Baykal, leader of the social democrat Republican People's Party, had threatened to withdraw his party's support for the 10-month-old government if it did not set a date for early polls. In recent weeks the coalition has looked close to collapse, amid speculation of snap elections and army pressure to crack down on Islamist dissent.

The coalition needs the support of Mr Baykal and his 54 MPs to be sure of a majority in parliament, where the Islamists are the main opposition.

Mr Yilmaz urged deputies not to slack now that elections were coming. "Parliament must work in an orderly fashion for the next three to four months," he said.

The government will probably need Mr Baykal's support for a draft bill to reform the leaky tax system, often blamed for the size of Turkey's budget deficit.

Turkey is also struggling with annual inflation of about 100 per cent and a sluggish privatisation programme.

New laws are being considered in the campaign against Islamic activists, after the armed forces reasserted their traditional power last week.

said one Western diplomat here. The prime minister had been anxious not to offend conservative religious voters by cracking the whip too hard against the Islamist movement, but the military made it clear that it would not accept "any steps backwards".

Mr Yilmaz came to power in a coalition of three parties last June after the military forced the previous Islamic-led government out of power because of its Islamisation

role in the day-to-day business of government in the past year.

The irony is that the more the military tries to rein in Islamic fundamentalists and push Turkey towards the West, the more it is seen to interfere in politics and undermine the concept of civilian democracy. That was one of the considerations which led the European Union to put aside Turkey's membership application.

Turkey may be overwhelmingly Muslim, but its modern secular traditions run deep. The challenge which faces the country, as it approaches the 75th anniversary in October of its foundation by the secularists' hero Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, is to find the right balance between religious freedom and broadly secular politics.

In the meantime, many disenfranchised members of the Welfare Party have joined the newly formed Virtue Party, which is now the largest political group in parliament. The military is hoping that the party will present a more moderate image.

The middle ground of Turkish politics, though, is split into competing factions, and fundamentalists still make most of the headlines.

'It is our job to deal with extremism. I didn't give such a duty to the military'

Mr Yilmaz had been arguing for a moderate relaxation of some of the measures advocated by the military against Islamic fundamentalism.

"It is our job to deal with extremism," he said. "I didn't give such a duty to the military."

A few days later, after the military high command reminded everyone of its constitutional obligations to protect secularism, Mr Yilmaz was forced to back down.

"Yilmaz against the military was hardly a fair fight,"

policies. Parliament will soon be asked to vote on measures which would, among other things, restrict the building of mosques and control the activities of religious foundations. Regulations affecting education and dress code are also expected to be changed.

A meeting last Friday of the National Security Council, on which military and political leaders sit, brought matters to a head.

The military still sees an Islamist threat everywhere, and it has taken a more active

Communists dash Yeltsin's plan

James Mack in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin's hopes of negotiating a smooth passage through parliament for his chosen prime minister were set back yesterday when the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, refused his party's support.

Although Mr Yeltsin has three chances under the constitution to gain parliament's approval of his candidate — the young former minister and businessman Sergei Kiriyenko, Mr Zyuganov made it clear yesterday that the communists would not vote for him "either the first time, or the second time, or the third time".

If the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, rejects Mr Kiriyenko all three times, Mr Yeltsin can dissolve the chamber and call new elections. Yesterday Mr Yeltsin and the heads of both houses of parliament agreed to meet regional leaders, trades

unionists and heads of political parties on Tuesday to hear their proposals for forming a new government. The Duma will vote on Mr Kiriyenko's nomination on Wednesday.

Mr Zyuganov said the Communists would propose their own government.

"The party wants to put forward an entire team in the name of a change of course,

The liberal Yabloko group, most of whom are likely to abstain or vote against Mr Kiriyenko, have another 44, meaning that if the left holds its ground he is most unlikely to get through.

There is widespread scepticism that the Communists will toe the party line on a third no-vote.

Tellingly, the government

remanded in custody by a court. About 250 supporters of the mayor were restrained by riot police after attacking the court chairman, Vladimir Vorobyov.

The election of the mayor, Andrei Klimentyev, was annulled by electoral officials for alleged irregularities and attempts to bribe voters.

Mr Klimentyev, a businessman with a criminal record, was under investigation for alleged embezzlement of state funds and was on bail during his campaign. During a routine court appearance yesterday he was taken into custody after his supporters refused to leave the chamber.

He used to be Mr Nemtsov's friend but later accused him of framing him. His popularity in Nizhny, a big industrial city, suggests the existence of a mass of disenfranchised citizens prepared to vote for anyone to spite young Nizhny liberals like Mr Nemtsov — formerly the region's governor — and Mr Kiriyenko, who ran a commercial bank there.

"We will not suggest our candidates — they would be doomed by the year's end"


but if it's the same old policies — monetarist and destructive — we cannot and will not suggest our candidates. They would all be doomed by the year's end."

Mr Kiriyenko needs the votes of half the Duma's usual 450 deputies plus one — even though in reality, due to illness and resignation, there are only 422 deputies.

The Communists and two allied parties have 213 seats.

HIDDEN AGENDAS

JOHN PILGER



"Pilger is the closest we have to the great correspondents of the 1930s... The Truth in his hands is a weapon, to be picked up and brandished and used in the struggle against evil and injustice."

Guardian

"John Pilger is fearless. He unearths, with steely attention to facts, the filthy truth, and tells it as it is. I salute him."

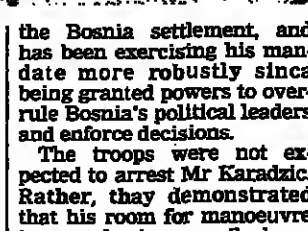
Harold Pinter

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Ian Traynor in Bonn

It was officially described as a "routine manoeuvre" aimed at enforcing the arms-control aspects of the Bosnian



Mr Westendorp's team is gearing up for the crucial Bosnian elections in September, and are eager to promote pluralist, non-nationalist opposition politics to try to

International resolve appears to have softened, however. A senior German official, Wolfgang Ischinger, said in Belgrade yesterday that the talks could get under way without an international role.



PHOTOGRAPH: SAVA RADOVANOVIĆ

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Is Jos a victi or a secon time?

Mr. David Rowan

Do you ha

Or write to: J. C.

Analysis Criminal injuries

Is Josie a victim for a second time?

The press has been in an uproar over the £18,500 award to the child who lost her mother, Lin Russell, and her sister Megan in a murderous attack. Yet to what extent should the taxpayer be asked to compensate innocent sufferers? By David Rowan

ON NOVEMBER 24, 1991, Georgina Bobin was brutally attacked at her home in Churchill Gardens, in Putney, central London. The upstairs neighbour "from across the road" (Bobin finds it painful to recall details too precisely), had been stalking the 36-year-old for some time; that day he turned on her "out of the blue", breaking her neck in two places and leaving eight fractures in her skull. He took the opportunity to flood her flat and destroy her household belongings. But that was only the start of Bobin's troubles.

"I was attacked on the Sunday and a detective helped me put in a claim for criminal injuries compensation on the Monday," remembers Bobin, who was told to expect financial redress for her injuries, inability to work, and losses in the flood. "Yet I've had nothing but grief and aggravation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board ever since. If I had known what I would be going through seven years ago, I would never have put in a claim. The path has been unbecomingly long."

Georgina Bobin has been made to relive her pain this week as the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) has announced that it will award her £18,500 for her injuries.

widespread condemnation over a rather better publicised case of criminal violence. It emerged that 11-year-old Josie Russell, left for dead two years ago when her mother Lin and sister Megan were killed in a hammer attack near their home in Chislehurst, Kent, had been awarded £18,500 for the loss of her mother. The amount was derisory, her lawyer immediately declared; it was a slap in the face, according to her father, "how can it be right?" asked the Daily Mail. And the CICB — run by "a cold-hearted, unfeeling, arrogant man", as the Sun put it — stood squarely in the firing line.

This is not the first time the authority has faced hostility. Publicity surrounded the award of £6,000 to Winnie Ball, whose three-year-old son Jonathan died in the Warrington IRA bomb blast in 1993. In 1996, five men who were abused in childhood won an appeal against the CICB, which had refused them compensation because of their criminal convictions.

Bobin herself has no doubts that the CICB is inadequate for its task, something the Josie Russell case merely confirms. "What she was awarded is not fair," she says. "That sum is not going to replace her mother, who even if she wasn't working inside a vital contribution to the household economy."

points out that it had made the award according to the book — at least, according to a fixed tariff which Parliament itself demanded. But it is this formal, officious approach of the CICB that, Bobin believes, has led to its inefficiency, slowness and insensitivity to individual victims' circumstances.

Bobin used to be a nurse, but because of her injuries was off work for five years. She was not allowed to return to nursing, and since a hysterectomy has only lately been able to take a part-time job in a Thornton's chocolate shop in Victoria. Seven years on, she has still to receive any compensation beyond a "little" interim payment. "They haven't given me any justification, apart from the fact that my name is in the queue." Meanwhile, she says she has been put through a treadmill of tests and examinations to assess just what level of post-traumatic stress she has suffered, according to the authority's fixed guidelines. "The trauma of having to go through a different psychiatrist or psychologist each time has caused me to have flashbacks," she says. "Each time I have to relive the attack all over again; it has been more traumatic than the actual injuries."

As for the CICB's treatment of Josie Russell, it is perhaps too soon to rush to judgment. She still awaits separate (probably larger) compensation awards for her own injuries, for her care and for potential loss of earnings. The £18,500 award, plus £4,000 made to her father for post-traumatic stress, are the subjects of appeals. But politicians have already been keen to intervene. The Labour MP Gwyn Prosser, whose Dorset constituency includes Chislehurst, said the award was "inadequate, derisory and insulting". On the Tory benches, Julian Brazier condemned "a very mean award". Even Tony Blair's official spokesman told the Sun: "He is very sympathetic towards this case — he genuinely feels a sense of injustice here and thinks it is an outrageous award."

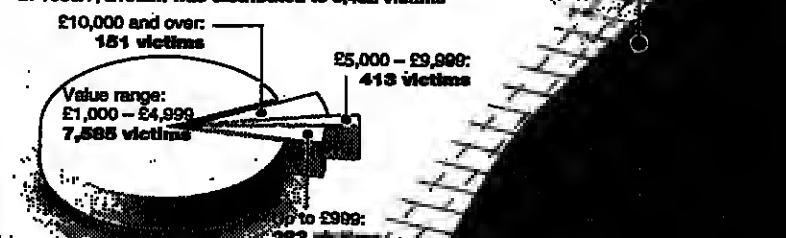
This followed Prime Ministerial intervention earlier this week in another legal matter, involving one Deirdre Rashid. But there is a crucial difference between offering support in the Weatherfield One's quest for justice in Coronation Street, and reducing the way the criminal-injury scheme works: the CICB's tariffs were set up to save money, and any loosening-up of the tariffs would have cost implications.

The price of crime

Since 1996/7, £18.5m has been paid for the loss of persons' lives. This award is made under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1996. The highest award is £250,000 for the death of a person under the age of 18. The award is based on the age of the victim at the time of the crime. They are paid to the victim's estate or to the victim if they are still alive.

Mental disorders
Awards for mental disorders are made under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1996. The highest award is £25,000 for a person suffering from a mental disorder. The award is based on the age of the victim at the time of the crime. They are paid to the victim's estate or to the victim if they are still alive.

Number and value of awards
In 1996/7, £18.5m was distributed to 8,432 victims



Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

IN what is already being described as the Diary's most notable campaign victory since saving the career of Linda, the BBC tea lady, the Daily Telegraph has made a dramatic U-turn over its cryptic crossword. The puzzle, as reported elsewhere in today's Guardian, was due to be handed over to computer, but no longer. "Let us gorge ourselves publicly on humble pie," wrote Boris the Jackal Johnson yesterday, announcing the decision, "and let us give ourselves a smack in the rear, an 'all.' There is no word as to whether the paper's enforcer has 'had a quiet word' yet with crossword editor Val Gilbert over the fiasco. And so, while the Jackal force feeds his colleagues with the choicest pastry of humility, here we banquet on the caviar of smug self-congratulation. As for G Thomas, who recently wrote to ask 'is there any point to your column at all?', here's your answer. For readers of the Guardian it is, of course, a complete waste of space... but for readers of other broadsheets, it's an absolute godsend.

SHILA Gunn, John Major's last press chief, has been commissioned to ghost the Downing Street autobiography of Humphrey, the cat, for an advance rumoured to be £100,000. "I would have to be terribly modest about that," says Miss Gunn. "To be honest, I never thought anyone would be interested in anything I would write. I wish I could be more confident about the whole thing." Good to know that the irrepressible self-belief that made Smith Square an object of such terror to Mandy and the gang has survived the election.

AT the Leeds headquarters of supermarket chain Asda — where chairman Archie Norman, William Hague's chum, insists there are no employers and staff, only colleagues — a splendid scheme is in place to help the environment. Only those who share their car journeys to work with colleagues are permitted to use a reserved section of the car park. So impressed were BBC Radio Leeds when they heard this that a reporter went along, and found chief executive Alan Leighton sharing his car with his chauffeur. "He was a bit of a hurry," explains environmental adviser Paul Bowtell, "and popped into the office very briefly. We're all fair and equal colleagues here." And so they are. God help Colleague Leighton when his environmentally aware colleagues in self-stacking get hold of him.

THE Nottingham Forest web site has been forced to apologise to a Danish fan of the club who cancelled his flight to the east Midlands for Wednesday's match with Sheffield United, after being taken in by an April 1st jest about a waterlogged pitch. British supporters were also confused by the spoof, and no wonder, for its subtlety made it near impossible to penetrate. There was one minuscule clue in the text (the name of the referee was stated as one Mr April Fool) but nothing otherwise to ring the alarm bells of mirth.

WITH the threat from Paula Jones now lifted, Bill Clinton has an even better reason to celebrate. His picture appears in an advertisement in this week's Evening and Action Gazette for a local clinic (no, not one of those). "See and experience the type of hearing aids," it invites readers, "as fitted to President Clinton." Will he never escape that Lothario image?



Your behaviour is not all in your genes — life is more complicated than that

Decca Aitkenhead



BEFORE the latest sci-fi fantasy film, Gattaca, opened in the USA, a poster appeared in the broadsheets. They read "Children made to order", alongside a soft-focus image of an apple-pie-perfect baby. The smaller print invited prospective parents to call a phone line, 1-800-BEST-DNA, for the opportunity to "engineer your off-spring". Prospective parents did.

It was a nice promotional trick for a futuristic movie which presents a future in which most of us will inhabit in our life-times — one where gene-perfect babies come from test-tubes, their CV is in their DNA, and society discriminates between the "valids", who work on exciting space projects, and the "in-valids", who clean toilets. As the ads demonstrated, a lot of people appear under the impression that this future is already arriving.

They have good reason to. One prominent geneticist who reviewed Gattaca wrote that its "genetic technology really is bang up to date", if not already obsolete. Research into predispositions for particular diseases has been spurred in the headlines by talk of pre-programmed personality. Last year, scientists were said to have found a "sociability" gene in girls. I read on Sunday that a gene for risk-taking has been found as well as for promiscuity, criminality and so on; the article's author is soon to publish a grand tome on genetics, so it was tempting to take his breezy claims of genetic destiny for absolute fact.

And increasingly for the public debate has become a tortuous delight for Moral Maze enthusiasts, its terms of reference lodged along an ethical axis which asks only

whether it is right to tamper with the middle of human behaviour. Would it be immoral to give birth to a baby who carried the violent gene? Will we miss criminals when they're a historical footnote like Lepers? Anyone disinclined to join in the debate is accused of being "left behind" by science. Discuss now, before it's too late!

Having not spent my life cutting up things in a laboratory, it is easy to find such urgent certainty compelling. Anyway, it seemed worth spending a day or so in the local courts, having a look at exactly who it is with these genes driving them to acts of crime and violence. Perhaps I just got unlucky, and came across some statistical freak peculiar to a bit of East London one week in April. But amazingly, I couldn't find a single case involving, say, an educated, middle class, white woman whose pesky criminal gene had driven her out of her advantaged home down a path of depravity. In fact, I didn't even find a white defendant — except an Irish immigrant. Weird, or what?

Sensible geneticists in their more sensible moments will say this is silly. Of course, genes can only play a small part in the grand scheme of human motivation. One told me that the "most dangerous word in genetics is 'for', as in a gene 'for' crime, or whatever. It's been terribly abused. Environment will always outweigh genes as an influence."

But even if our common sense rejects bolder talk of "major-effect genes", we're still stuck in the Moral Maze fantasy debate wondering whether we shouldn't get rid of genes that can sometimes spell trouble. This is an abstractly interesting question, in reality,

however, it is entirely pointless. The science of it alone is flawed: there are something like 100,000 genes in a human being, and their infinitely varied interactions make a nonsense of the debate. Just because scientists have found a gene in a vole that makes it promiscuous, this doesn't mean humans have a "promiscuity gene". Humans are rather more complex creatures than voles — though, on reflection, perhaps an exception might be made for the ones now going around saying everything's "in your genes". And once environment is factored in, the whole debate becomes risible — even if you could identify a gene for risk-taking, it could make for a great snooker player, or alternatively a great joy rider.

The debate may be pointless, then, but the important point is this: it is not irrelevant. When predictions of genetically engineered personality escape the confines of sci-fi movies and keep turning up on Start The Week, the myth of genetic destiny starts to infiltrate popular consciousness. As has been remarked elsewhere, "it's in my genes" is becoming the modern version of "it's in my stars" — and a justification for stupid prejudice is born.

SURVEYS in America showed that, following a dubious report claiming girls were innately worse at maths, girls did indeed start to perform badly. Parents thought there wasn't much point encouraging them; girls thought they might as well not bother trying. If we're seduced by Melvyn Bragg's guests and catchy headlines into believing that criminality is caused by genes, not only will young offenders see little point in pursuing a dif-

ferent kind of future, but, more worryingly, public opinion will see little point in doing much for them either. And we only have to look at the prison statistics to see that we're saying blacks are genetically predisposed to be criminals. As one criminologist put it, "I'd rather they didn't even study genetics and violence. The very act of spending money on it, publishing it in the newspapers, validates it as being important, whereas it has no practical consequence except for a very important ideological one: it says, 'Ah, you see, it's genes that make people violent.'"

There are lots of reasons for criminal behaviour. Prisoners are statistically more likely to have been in care, for example; violent offenders abuse themselves. It doesn't take a genius to work this out — though "genius" geneticists seem to struggle with it. So instead they offer an explanation that is scientifically doubtful, but — more to the point — practically useless, and which gives society an excuse to stop trying to tackle poverty or racism, and define the poor and blacks as the problem instead.

Those who prefer not to indulge in fantasies about a sci-fi future which will never arrive are not being irresponsible. It will never be "too late". On the other hand, media alarmists and enthusiasts alike are leading us into the worst of all possible worlds, where we blame genes for things we can't do anything about, and neglect the things we can. This is the only nightmare future the popularisation of genetics conjures up. Sadly, unlike the future of Gattaca, it is actually arriving.

Sex with sister

Bill Buford



ONE OF the more intriguing mail-order successes in the United States is a video entitled "Too Hot for TV". Made from out-takes from the Jerry Springer show, it consists of the bits that even the producers felt they couldn't get away with showing. Jerry Springer, of course, is the thing that succeeded Oprah — one of the trash talk-shows on American TV that is so trashy that it has come to be seen as a rather elevated affair: the live audience consists, in large part, of young college kids.

And it's largely good fun, and the success of the video proves it, with 500,000 sold so far. You can't get it in Britain yet, but you can watch the show in the middle of the day on ITV. Each episode has a simple title: "Honey I'm a call girl". "Guess what? I'm a man". "I have sex with my sister" — and a predictable but effective routine: a man or woman appears who has a secret which is being kept from someone backstage. Then the person backstage comes out and it is told the news.

The out-takes begin with two young sisters, Tammy and Angie, Angie, evidently, has slept with all three of Tammy's husbands. We should pause: Tammy, a woman still in her 20s, has already had three husbands; her sister Angie has had sex with all of them. Do we need to know any more than that? It doesn't matter; we don't get the chance. No sooner does Jerry say, "Let's start with you, Tammy," then Angie says, "You're so full of shit, you white-trash whore," leaps out of her chair, grabs her sister by her hair, and hurries her to the floor.

IN THE next scene, we witness a man seated between two women. Jerry addresses one of them: "So, Gina, you're married..." when he is interrupted by the man in the middle: "Yeah, to a little dickhead." The dickhead in question then appears stage right, and the man in the middle gets out of his chair and — sprints across the length of the stage, leaves his feet, brings his knees to his chest, and slams into the chest of the entirely unsuspecting dickhead, who, caught off-guard, falls backwards into the cameraman with a great crash.

There is a scene involving a father who beats up a boy-friend of his daughter. There is a scene of two rivals in love, sitting face to face, and one says "boo", and a fight breaks out. In one scene, a mother

appears and goes straight for her daughter and starts yanking out her hair, and the expression on the mother's face is so disturbing — she has a goofy grin and her eyes are wide in exhilaration — that I replayed the video. This is a woman, I found myself thinking, who should never have been allowed out. This is a woman who has bathed for this show, and it's the first time she's bathed this month.

The language on the programme is rather interesting. "Dickhead" appears to be the term of abuse most favoured by the men, usually in one of two constructions: "you little dickhead", or, no contradiction evidently, "you big dickhead". "White-trash whore" is the term favoured by the white women, which makes a certain sense. There is some discussion and an effort is made at dialogue. Jerry's stance is paternal and rather moralistic, and he is given to asking questions like: "Did you think it was wrong to sleep with your husband's father?" But the answers are unilluminating. "It's, like, I don't know," one of them says, a woman with broad thighs and a very tight skirt, liked many, many inches above her knees. "You know, I was sort of, what the hell, why not, and like, you know, one thing kind of led to another, and we, like, sort of, well, you know, whatever."

And so? What does it mean? The Jerry Springer show evidently began as an earnest thing — grandmothers talking about their grandchildren — and its viewer was the housewife at home. Then the producers jizzed it up considerably — they had to or they would have been out of business — and the target audience was identified as the college crowd: bright, sophisticated, prepared to be entertained by anything. The moral wrinkle is the people

Angie says 'You white-trash whore' and grabs her sister by her hair

on stage. They, like the audience, tend to be young — usually in their early 20s, and full of some kind of sexual vitality that they haven't figured out how to control — but, unlike the audience, they are not college kids. Most of them are not very educated. Many, I suspect, have trouble reading. And while, of course, anyone appearing on the show should know what they're in for, the truth is the guests are ignorant, untutored, inarticulate people who are so excited by the idea of being on TV — their entrances always characterised by a hip-to-hip swagger, their arms aloft in a some kind of a victory dance. A declaration that I, too, am a star — that they never quite grasp that they are not stars: they're clowns. We all have a good laugh because they are so ignorant and untutored and inarticulate. It's like watching cringles play football. It's very funny; very, very funny.

Why the establishment turned out to honour an aristocratic commoner

Rupert's monster

Ian Aitken

TRY this for size: Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother was represented by Mr Michael Oswald, Prince Michael of Kent and the Hon Sir Angus Ogilvy were present. Canon Donald Gray officiated and the Rt Rev Lord Runcie led the prayers. Mr Rupert Murdoch, Chairman and Chief Executive of The News Corporation, read the lesson. Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, OM, gave an address.

Or this: "The Speaker, Baroness Thatcher, LG, OM, FRS, and Sir Denis Thatcher, and Mr John Major attended. Among others present were the Duke of Beaufort, the Duke of Devonshire, The Marquess and Marchioness of Anglesey, the Countess of Tavistock, the Countess of Avon, the Earl of Huntingdon, the Earl of Scar-

borough, the Earl and Countess of Wiltton, Viscount Falkland, Viscount Leverhulme, Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Viscount and Viscountess Norwich..."

And so on, and so on, through a substantial chunk of Burke's Peerage and Who's Who. So who, or what, was it all in aid of? I offer a clue: it was a memorial service at St Margaret's, Westminster. But unless you know already, I doubt if you'll guess.

Another clue, then. The person being memorialised was a columnist for the News of the World, the below-the-waist end of Rupert Murdoch's media empire, as well as for its flagship, the Times. Still a mystery? All right, I'll tell you. It was for Woodrow Wyatt.

What, I hear you ask, that funny little chap with the big cigar who used to be a Labour MP and later be-

came one of Maggie Thatcher's most devoted fans? Yes indeed, the very same. And pretty well the entire British establishment turned out to celebrate his life, which ended last December.

True, there weren't all that many Labour MPs there, which is a comfort of

You have to hand to it to dear old Woodrow — he certainly had style

sorts. After all, Rupert Murdoch was reading the lesson, and it wouldn't have been a total surprise if Tony Blair, or at least his press secretary, had turned up out of respect.

But they didn't, which meant that they missed the

Prince of Darkness reading out the only clear defence of the capitalist system to be found in the New Testament — the parable of the talents from Matthew 25.

That story, in case you have forgotten it, is the one about an enlightened employer who hands out cash to his three employees and tells them to look after it for him. One does exactly as he is told, and returns with his original stake intact. But the other two lend their share on the market and come back with a 100 per cent profit.

The profiteers are rewarded for their enterprise. The third gets a scolding, and loses his stake. And the moral is that most perfect of all definitions of the free market: "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he



Britain's only other do-it-yourself duke, Roy Jenkins, delivered the eulogy. Puzzlingly, however, his main theme wasn't that his subject had been a jolly good chap. Instead, his main proposition was that Wyatt's entire life had been marked by courage.

Now, it's true that his war record was admirable. He may even have needed a bit of pluck to expose the machinations of the Communist Party inside the trades unions in the 1950s. But courage to write rightwing nonsense in the News of the Screws? Is it suggested that Murdoch used to berate him for going too far in his attacks on the enemies of capitalism? I don't think so, somehow.

So why will I too be raising a glass to the dear old monster, tonight? The answer is that I liked him. Everybody does, which is all you need to know really.

مركز من الامم

The Guardian

Friday April 3 1998
Edition Number 47139
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Fax No. 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

Asia's fall from grace

The future is ethical

ASIA MEETS Europe in London today in a very different mood from the last occasion. At the first — barely noticed — Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in Bangkok two years ago, the European participants prostrated themselves before the Asian miracle. Now Tony Blair in his Millennium power-house pledges European help to restore confidence in the region. Asian voices may claim that the crisis is a temporary blip. Yesterday's World Bank forecast that Indonesia will need three billion US dollars in emergency food and medical aid over the next year points to deeper consequences. So does the dire warning of the Sony chairman that Japan's economy is "on the verge of collapse."

It would be disingenuous for the Europeans to take quiet satisfaction in Asia's fall from grace. If the miracle was hyped, the largest claque in the audience (along with the IMF and World Bank until almost the very end) was found among commentators who bumbled endlessly about Europe's need to "learn from the sunrise societies". This obscured the real reasons for Asia's very considerable achievements — and the weaknesses which were manifest too. It also encouraged powerful financial interests in Asia to believe they could continue indefinitely to suck up huge sums of short-term foreign investment for grandiose schemes.

There has indeed been spectacular growth accompanied by poverty reduction in Asia — as a new Oxfam study shows.

This was neither the result of free market prescription (as the World Bank claimed) nor of authoritarian rule — the "Asian values" invented by power-holders to fend off human rights critics. It was a much more complex mix of policies which also stressed education, health and redistribution of productive assets.

Today the European side at Asem will show its support for Asia by backing the IMF and the World Bank's rescue efforts and by pledging to keep European markets open to Asian goods. This is a bit too easy. Some parts of the IMF's prescription make good sense: high-level corruption, unaccountable banking regimes, and the break-up of monopolies linked to political elites, all need to be addressed. But why should international funds bail out foreign investors who burnt their fingers by high-risk lending to Asia — and create new debt burdens in the process? The lesson of Africa and Latin America is that debt must be reduced rather than increased. And why insist on liberalisation which will open Asia to renewed assaults by currency speculators and short-term investors, when what is needed is discipline as much within the international financial community as within the region?

What needs to be stressed instead is the link between economic growth and social and political equity. Indonesia again offers a negative example in both areas. Eight million rural families, UNDP reported yesterday, live on less than two meals a day; it forecasts even more serious food shortages next year. It is not only immoral but short-sighted for Western governments to remain silent while the ossified Suharto regime hangs on. Yesterday the Nobel peace prize winner José Ramos Horta, urged a rescue package for Indonesia to include specific measures on political reform such as inde-

pendent trade unions, lifting censorship and the release of political prisoners. He was speaking at an "alternative reception" in London for those people of Asia unrepresented at Asem. They include Tibetans, East Timorese, the bulk of the Burmese population, and millions of other Asians, particularly rural Asians, who were largely excluded from the boom but now suffer from the consequences of its collapse.

Genuine partnership requires a policy linking aid and investment to social justice and fair distribution. It is not only the right package in moral terms, but the positive side of the Asian experience has shown that it is the only one which works. If this Asem meeting can pave the way for ethical development to become part of ethical foreign policy, it will not be forgotten so soon.

Economic Growth with Equity, by Kevin Watkins, Oxfam, £5.95.

Children at risk

Don't forget the real culprits

STANDBY for the next round of hunt the paedophile. The ring leader of one of the nastiest paedophile gangs is due to be released next week. Tabloid newspapers are already campaigning for Sidney Cooke, who was sentenced with Robert Oliver for the rape and manslaughter of 14-year-old runaway Jason Swift, to be kept in prison. Oliver alone, who has run up police and secure accommodation costs in excess of £100,000 since his release last September, was bounded out of six towns before seeking protection from the police in Brighton. He spent four months in Brighton police cells before transferring to a medium security unit for mentally-disordered offenders in Buckinghamshire. Contrary to some

campaigners, the predatory paedophile problem is gradually being resolved.

The biggest problem posed by Oliver and Cooke is that they were sentenced before the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, which introduced compulsory supervision of sex offenders. The Crime and Disorder Bill, currently before Parliament, will add further protection through longer post-release supervision and much stricter conditions. And further protection may still be introduced through a new indeterminate sentence for the small minority who are categorised as exceptionally dangerous. But what can be done about the Oliver and Cooke sentenced prior to 1991? One legislative step would be to add a clause to the current bill, empowering the courts to impose strict supervision on such offenders. This would not be retrospective legislation because the orders, based on civil not criminal power, would be based on current risk not past offence.

Public disquiet over predatory paedophiles is understandable. There are few worse crimes but the publicity they generate distorts the real picture of child abuse. The biggest threat to children is not the prowling stranger but perverted parents, step-parents, relatives or family friends. These are the people who perpetrate the vast proportion of sex abuse committed on children. The Cookes and Oliver divert attention from these equally insidious offenders. All agencies — police, probation, housing — are now working much more closely together. Risk assessments are being taken much more seriously. And the new police approach will provide even more protection: high risk offenders who refuse to accept approved housing, treatment programmes, and maintaining contact with probation officers are warned their whereabouts could be released to local

papers. It's not nice, nor perfect, but pragmatic. In the delicate balance between a released offender's right to be free from persecution and children's rights to be free from abuse, children's rights win. Children have every right to expect protection.

Yankee Dipsy

But the accent isn't right

1997 may not go down in history as the Year of the Teletubbies but that is not to understate their impact on popular culture. The cult BBC series was reviled by European and American critics at the recent World Summit for Children because it failed to deal with "serious children's issues". An Australian TV executive dismissed it as "regressive for any child who has gone beyond the babbling phase". It has been accused of subversion and counter-revolution as well as being "immensely educational" and even quasi-religious. Its tendency to repetition is justified by BBC research showing that children need to have things repeated as much as four times before they know what is going on. Research was carried out in nurseries around Britain making the world's youngest focus groups.

Teletubbie mania may now storm the US. On Monday the creatures will hit US screens backed by a million dollar advertising campaign. The US version will have one key difference. The disembodied voices of Tinky Winky, Laa-Laa, Dipsy and Po will be spoken with American accents. It is one thing to bring up a new generation speaking gibberish, quite another for it to be gibberish with an English accent. They want to make sure that Cool Britannia doesn't rule the waves.

Letters to the Editor

You can't fool us

PETER TATCHELL's letter yesterday quite put me off my breakfast. I understand that the technique he describes has been used for some years on anaesthetised male gorillas, to obtain the whereabouts for artificially inseminating female gorillas. In the interests of science, not to mention the enjoyability of breakfasts, could Mr Tatchell be invited to try it with a fully conscious male gorilla? David Woodrow, Studley, Warks.

YOUR named "political staff" reported that Peter Mandelson was preparing to censor the speeches of Opposition spokesmen — all, of course, in the interests of greater accuracy (Mandelson plan to make Opposition more "helpful", April 1). Under the cunning guise of an April Fool, the sinister development of the totalitarian state continues. Lawrence Kuglin, London.

MARK PAVSON must not give up writing to you, nor must he become a celebrity. An MP, a representative of an organisation or even a doctor like John Davies (Letters, April 2). Any letter writer can be successful, even one using a second-class stamp — as long as the letter is enclosed in something Mr Blair would describe as "a pen different". A yellow octagonal envelope with purple stripes or a green, deckle-edged, triangular one is called for. My most successful letter was sent in a pair of Madonna's discarded, but autographed knickers. John Sheeran, Cheltenham.

BEST assured, Mr Pavson, it doesn't work even if you have a model. Henry Hudson, London.

Lessons of exclusion

THE explosion in school exclusions (School Leagues blamed for boom in exclusions, March 31) has hit children looked after by local authorities very hard: 26 per cent of youngsters aged 14-16 in public care are either excluded or not attending school regularly; they are 10 times more likely than their peers to be permanently excluded. As a stable home environment is considered key to educational achievement, it is not surprising that children who have suffered family breakdown are disproportionately represented in exclusions. Those who have suffered abuse or neglect are particularly likely to find difficulty conforming to the demands of a school environment. Since most children in public care are in foster care, exclusions have greatly increased pressures on foster carers, who have to make alternative arrangements for children in their care who are temporarily or permanently excluded.

An appalling 75 per cent of children looked after by local authorities leave school with no qualifications. Not surprisingly, compared with their peers, they are four times more likely to be unemployed between the ages of 16 and 24, 60 times more likely to join the ranks of the young homeless and 50 times more likely to serve time in prison. The poor performance seems to be exacerbated by low expectations from social workers, teachers and carers. With the continued rise in exclusions — and a reduced willingness to work with difficult pupils — things can only get worse. Pat Verity, National Foster Care Association, London.

AFTER more than 20 years of teaching in secondary schools, I have never had to face the sort of aggression and dismissive attitudes from so many pupils and their parents as I have had lately. Regularly, pupils fail to complete work on

time and no amount of pressure makes them comply. Their response is often rude and arrogant. In most cases parents collude. Letters are sent with extraordinary claims as to why it is not possible to do the work. Pupils insist and parents write a note claiming they were ill. Last week I was assaulted for the first time. What does not seem to be appreciated is the perception a sizeable number of people have of education. A common refrain is "I won't need to know that to get a job"; "what good is it to read Shakespeare?" Education has to be worked at. Too many prefer to sit back and let things happen and when things don't, to complain. In the year I teach, the amount of work completed by the pupils over two years averages out at 36.5 per cent; only one pupil out of 98 completed 100 per cent of the work. Is anyone surprised exclusions are used so often? Name and address supplied.



Britannia just lost its cool

ONE OF the most pleasant things about the British people was the lack of self-consciousness and the way that they did not take themselves too seriously. But that was before the Cool Britannia phenomenon. Now everybody — even allegedly serious newspapers — have embarked on the mission of shouting to the world how great, and cool, and hip, and amazing, Britain is. But the most surprising thing is that no matter how many tourists visit London and how many British designers are working for French haute couture houses, Britain

is still a very traditional place. How cool is a country where you cannot have a drink after 11 pm, where trains are always late (when they run at all), where the underground system is breaking into pieces (though it is scandalously over-priced), and where anything from a can of peas to a pair of shoes is more expensive than in any other place in Europe? What's the point of flashy packaging when it's the same old baked beans on offer? Eumdee Goes, London correspondent of Diario de Noticias.

Time Europe recognised the realities of a divided Cyprus

CYPRUS clearly cannot be considered for EU membership whilst the present situation remains (Analysis: Merger threat to Cyprus, April 1). It is a ludicrous pretence that the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus represents the Turkish Cypriot community or the island as a whole. The independent, multi-cultural Republic of Cyprus was overthrown by the Greek colonels in the coup of 1974. Britain, as guarantor of the independent status along with Greece and Turkey, chose to do nothing, despite having two huge military bases and thousands of troops on the spot. Turkey had no option but to act to safeguard the Turkish Cypriot population on the island, since Nicos Sampson, who had overthrown the Makarios government, was committed to union with Greece, which would have meant ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Cypriot population. It is clear by its inaction that Britain, and probably Nato,

were happy to conspire in this plot to get rid of Makarios, who was considered pro-Soviet. The domestic political position in Cyprus must be stabilised. This means one of three options: a federal Cypriot republic with autonomous Greek and Turkish states; universal recognition of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus as an equal, legitimate entity alongside the Greek Republic of Cyprus; or union of the Greek Cypriot Republic with Greece and integration of the northern Turkish Cypriot Republic with Turkey. Any of these options is preferable to the status quo. John Papantonian, London.

CHRIS Morris suggests that the problem now arising with Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots is the making of the EU. Surely the problem was created when the Turks decided to invade Cyprus? Tim Bleackley, Athens, Greece.

Head-on

EVIDENCE from hospital casualty departments may suggest an incontrovertible case for cyclists to wear helmets to limit their risk of head injury (On your heads be it, Society, April 1). However, comprehensive research has shown a number of fallacies. Cycle helmets are not designed, nor can they be, to offer much protection in a collision with a motor vehicle — which accounts for the great majority of serious head injuries. In addition, it presupposes, incorrectly, that cyclists' sense of security is not exaggerated by wearing a helmet, leading them to ride marginally less carefully. Due vigilance by cyclists is likely to be more effective in reducing the risk of collision in the

first place, and therefore of head injury. In the Netherlands, which makes proper provision for cycling, nearly one-third of journeys are made by bicycle — in contrast to 2 per cent in Britain. The casualty rate is far lower there; few Dutch cyclists wear helmets and there is no strong pressure for their promotion. Advocates of helmet-wearing should note that five times as many pedestrians and five times as many people in cars die of head injuries as do cyclists. Dr Mayer Hillman, Policy Studies Institute, London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters. The Country Diary is on Page 14.

Strong talk

WHAT is the long-term disadvantage of a strong currency (George expects pound to weaken, April 2)? During my national service in Germany in 1988 we got DM11.80 to the pound, about \$4. Over 43 years the pound has depreciated by four times against the DM and is now only worth less than half that amount of dollars, yet Germany and the US have enjoyed a higher standard of living. It does not appear to have inhibited the export of Volkswagens to this country. Would not tackling the strong pound through increased long-term investment leave British industry in a stronger position? John Harris, Belper, Derbyshire.

In the know

LORD Callaghan corrects my reference to his role in the late Joan Lester's move from the Foreign Office to the Department of Education in 1975 (Letters, March 30). He should know and I apologise for the inaccuracy. But the source of my apparent error is, well, interesting: it is none other than Lord Callaghan's old comrade Barbara Castle. In her published Diaries for June 11, 1975, she writes: "One of the things that shocks me most is the removal of Joan Lester from the Foreign Office... She was obviously a breath of fresh air in that institution. I gather that her move was due to personal representations by Jim to Harold. He had found her behaviour 'embarrassing' to him. I shan't for-

give Jim for that. She is going to Education; again, a move no one can really complain about unless they are in the know." Julia Langdon, London.

AMELIA Gentleman says that it is part of the role of a mediator to help couples "avoid solicitors" (Analysis, March 31). The role of the mediator is to help couples negotiate their own fair and lasting agreements, thereby avoiding the court process. Because a mediator cannot give advice, he/she should always recommend that couples obtain advice on those aspects of their negotiation which require it — including legal advice on points of law. John Engman, Member, British Association of Lawyer Mediators, Merseyside.

Tony's debugger

Bel Littlejohn

LAY OFF it, guys: Alastair Campbell has done one helluva lot for the New Labour Movement, and it's high time we gave him a week. And that's official — yesterday morning those of us on the senior level of government advisers received a letter signed simply "Yours sincerely, An Official Spokesman".

"It's high time you laid off Alastair Campbell and gave him a break," it said. "If you do not, you can just P-I-S-S off, because you're just a load of C-R-A-P anyway, so who bloody cares." Alastair's always had a way with words. It's widely known that he first made his name as a wordsmith way back in the early 1970s, when he was the award-winning lyricist with the socially-aware progressive rock group, Slade, fronted by his long-standing colleague Dave Hill. It's an open secret within New Labour that Alastair continues to urk himself on smugging Slade lyrics into the speeches he writes for the Prime Minister, thus ensuring the support of millions of their former fans. "My vision for Britain," said Tony in a major pre-election speech in Halifax this time last year, "is one of a national renewal, a country

with drive, purpose and energy, a country in which the dignity of each and every citizen is a right, not a privilege. So let's get down and get with it, and cum on feel the noise because, frankly, both nationally and internationally, Mama we're all crazy now." The speech brought people of the "his generation to their feet" — yet surprisingly few of the professional commentators were able to detect the essential Campbell/Slade hallmarks that subliminally triggered it. But Alastair's forceful way with words has never, as some hard-left Tony commentators have implied, been employed to influence senior ministers in Tony's administration. Far from it. Once he's told them what to say, he stands well back from the spotlight and just lets them get on with it. At the beginning of this week, I was delighted to bump into Alastair

at a purely routine dinner reception for Mr Murdoch at Number 10. (Incidentally, it's a sign of Tony's growing reputation that he has gained the confidence of such an experienced world-leader as Mr Murdoch, and it's high time we in New Labour gave him credit for it.) Anyway, Alastair had gathered a select group of ministers to pay tribute to Mr Murdoch. Before his arrival, Alastair assembled the ministers in his Downing Street office to offer them friendly encouragement. "Is your hair hurting by any chance?" he asked the lovely Chris Smith. "Not at all, sir," replied Chris, smiling sweetly. "Well it bloody well ought to, because I'm standing on it," you terrible little man! Get it, sir," said Alastair. "Thank you kindly, sir," said Chris with genuine gratitude, but Alastair had moved down the line to Robin Cook.

"Ow's the bird then?" asked Alastair. "Bearing up very well under the circumstances, thank you for asking, sir," replied Robin. "Gonna make an honest woman of her, are we, then?" said Alastair. "Yes, sir! With your permission, sir," replied Robin. "Cos we wouldn't want to upset Mr Murdoch, would we, now? And we wouldn't want to lose our lovely big house in the country with its lush lawns and full complement of servants, now, would we, eh?" "No sir! Honest woman, sir!" No doubt these off-the-record informal conversations will be caricatured in the Tory press as showing that Alastair has ideas above his station. Yet the ministers concerned were all very grateful for his advice, making their thanks clear in spontaneous written submissions, signed and com-

mitted in his presence, now available on request from the Downing Street Press Office. And the reception went very smoothly, with each minister being presented by Alastair to Mr Murdoch, who was very good at putting them at their ease, often sharing a joke or a political insight with them before sending them on their way with a prearranged signal. Incidentally, it's Alastair who's had the vision to set up the millennium hug task-force. There have been growing fears in government circles that at the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1999, Tony will revert to the year 1900, growing side-whiskers, donning a frock coat, deporting shoplifters and demanding a full policy review for the relief of Mafeking. And if the bug proves difficult, it'd better watch out, 'cos it'll have Alastair to answer to, bless him.

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Set fair the word for France



René Andrieu, journalist, born March 24, 1920; died March 26, 1998



Cassilly ... 'formidable' in the Trojans (1977) CLIVE BARDA

Barbie boys

BILLY, the world's first gay doll, gets a boyfriend next month as Carlos, his Puerto Rican beau, arrives on our shores. After meeting Billy at his coming-out party on Miami beach (some guys have all the luck), the two apparently fell in love and Carlos, who's described as "sensitive, intelligent and strikingly handsome," has now turned up to be with his partner and their wardrobe.

It should be interesting to see how Carlos fares in Slightly. His boyfriend has had a somewhat mixed reception. "Billy dolls are incredibly popular," says Miles, the

Dilly Dali

MODERN artist as conman: Salvador Dali. The phroniness of Dali's work, from the late thirties until his death in 1989, coincided with the period of his greatest notoriety and wealth. He threw political and aesthetic principle to the dogs, becoming a born-again supporter of Franco and a fervent monarchist in order to ensure his security after the defeat of the Spanish republic, and spent the rest of his life as a salon jester of cosmic pretensions.

The irony is that everyone except the critics loved the product. Dali offered what so many of his contemporaries couldn't or wouldn't: classicism, with an illusionistic surface that testified to hours

"image" in every sense make rewarding study for anyone still interested in the relationship between art and life. He made a speciality of concealment and revelation in both areas, but, as his investment in the world changed, so did his painting — shifting from the nervous intricacy of the twenties to an opulence as facile as the epigrams about his moustache.

London Review of Books on the shameful life of Salvador Dali

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; fax 0171-713 4366; write Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

The structure of the Simon-side massif varies from the Cheviots and the Roman wall. Because no volcanic turbulence was responsible, these hills are composed of a coarse sedimentary rock, described as fell sandstone, a barrier of escarpments between the Cheviot hills and the North-umberland coast. Walk across Garlegh moor and you can see evidence of rock sculptures and concealed tracks, where the Celts were required

Driving home, we were amazed to see two dead badgers by the roadside, unmarked by a vehicle and with no limbs broken. To my knowledge, there are no badgers in that vicinity. A gamekeeper tells me that four other dead badgers were found on the roadside between Morpeth and Berwick last week, with another two on the grass verges on the road between Bellingham and Hexham. "I can only think that they have been dumped by badger baiters," he sighed.

"There doesn't seem to be any other logical explanation."

MEMPHIS, REA

CORRECTIONS AND C

NIN A report headed, Labour seminar lures lobbyist cash, Page 10, April 1, Matthew Taylor was incorrectly described as deputy general secretary of the Labour Party. He is actually one of the party's two assistant general secretaries; he is responsible for policy and campaigns. The deputy general secretary is Margaret McDonagh.

IN THE obituary of David

CLARIFICATIONS

Hicks, Page 16, April 1, we misspelt the name of his house in Oxfordshire. It should have been Britwell Salome.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Jan Mayes, by telephoning 0171 239 5589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: readers@guardian.co.uk

and loving father of Rachel, Adam and Matthew. Died peacefully on 1 April 1998, aged 68. Funeral arrangements: 1000 hrs, Manchester Crematorium, Barlow Moor Road, Manchester 21 on 6 April at 1.30pm. Donations to: Co-op Funeral Service, West Cheshire Road, Chorley, Nr. PR6 1NE. Tel: 0161 881 2212.

MURPHY, Dr Frances, our much-loved mother, who opened so many loving hearts. Died peacefully on 1 March 1998, aged 88. We may we continue to bring your love, Sam, Simon and Rebecca. Family and friends will meet at 1.30pm on 6 March. No flowers. Donations to The Mitchell Palin Centre for Spasmodic Calficramps, 1000 hrs, 6 March, 1998, London. EC2R 0JH or The Friends of West London Airshow, Tebury, Glou. GL9 5GS.

ROVATSEWING, The engagement is announced between David, elder son of Captain and Mrs L.L. Kovess of London and Michelle, daughter of Dr and Mrs G.G.

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[illegible]



Strong on sterling... Eddie George gives evidence on European monetary union to the Treasury select committee at the House of Commons

Brown pounds productivity

Michael White and Mark Atkinson

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, yesterday promised to devote next year's Budget to closing the productivity gap between British firms and their international rivals.

Brushing aside continuing pressure for immediate action to stem the rise of the pound, he insisted the strength of sterling should encourage firms to raise their competitiveness — and close

a productivity gap of up to 40 per cent. "I'm aware of the problems that exporters face," he told parliamentary reporters, "but we've got to take a long-term view. Industry understands — its workers and managers — that they must be careful about their wage bargaining in order to ensure greater competitiveness, particularly in relation to exports."

Mr Brown said senior British and US industrialists — including executives from Glaxo, CKN and Ford Worldwide — had agreed to join a series of seminars to be held at 11 Downing Street in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry.

The DIT is already hosting a series of working groups, comprising senior business executives and union leaders, on measures to raise competitiveness, including improving innovation and productivity. Mr Brown said that, having "created stable and prudent foundations" for the economy and championed job opportunities, the Government now planned to encourage enterprise. "There is indeed a 40 per cent gap between our selves and the top rivals to us

in the industrial field, and this is a productivity gap that must be bridged." McKinsey, the management consultancy, is producing a report on relative productivity in Europe, Asia and the US which is due in the early summer. The results of this and the Downing Street seminars will shape measures to improve productivity in the autumn pre-budget statement. But Willem Bulter, an independent member of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, said exporters were "getting hammered" by the strength of sterling and

Windfalls for 100,000 investors

Pauline Springett and Rupert Jones

CANADA Life yesterday became the latest mutual life insurer to announce plans to convert to a public company. The move promises windfalls of around £2,200 for 100,000 qualifying policyholders in the UK. The proposal means that all four of Canada's life insurers have announced intentions to demutualise. Earlier this year Sun Life of Canada announced it was considering becoming a public company. Canadian law still prevents mutual life insurers from converting but legislation allowing this to happen is expected by the middle of this year.

A spokesman for Canada Life in the UK said that he did not expect the flotation, and the payouts, to go through until late next year. Canada Life started selling insurance in Britain in 1903. In the past few years it has become acquisitive, buying Manulife's UK operation and the Windsor Life sales force in 1995, and Albany Life last year. The Canadian group provides some 840,000 British policies, but only 100,000 are invested in contracts that share in the profits of the company — called with-profits — and only those policyholders qualify for a payout on demutualisation. People with more than one policy can only qualify for one payout. Anyone who took out a with-profits policy after 5pm yesterday will not be eligible for the payout. However, windfalls will be made on qualifying policies which mature before the flotation goes through. A spokesman for the company said the flotation would make it easier for the company to raise capital to make acquisitions. He said the company did not have anything in its sights at the moment but was on the look-out. Canada Life is currently in the top 20 in the UK in terms of new premium income and aims to be in the top 15 by the end of the century. The company employs 2,200 people, and its British head office is in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. It has £8 billion of funds under management in the UK.

News in brief

Deutsche announces first job losses

DEUTSCHE Bank yesterday announced the first of the 9,000 jobs it is expected to unroll over the next three years at its investment bank, Morgan Grenfell, confirming that 1,200 jobs will go in London and New York. It also announced plans to cut another 4,000 jobs in its German retail branch network. The news came as Deutsche, which has invested heavily in its investment banking over the past 18 months, announced a fall in full-year profits from DM2.218 billion (£715 million) to DM1.019 billion (£330 million). Wall Street giant Morgan Stanley is expected to announce shortly that it is selling its global custody business, with rival Chase Manhattan seen as the likeliest buyer. — *Jan King*

VW ups bid for Rolls

VOLKSWAGEN confirmed last night that it has tabled a higher offer to Vickers, which agreed on Monday to sell Rolls-Royce Motors to BMW for £240 million. It is believed to be offering up to DML7 billion (£550 million) for Rolls, assuming engine maker Cosworth is included in the deal, while — like BMW — it is also thought to have made pledges on investment at various Rolls operations. Vickers has said it will negotiate exclusively with BMW until the end of the month. — *Jan King*

Goldman Sachs expands

The Goldman Sachs International investment bank is to double the size of its European headquarters on Fleet Street. It already occupies the building used to be the Daily Telegraph headquarters and will take over the former Daily Express building next door and link the two with a bridge. — *Bloomberg*

British Gas attacked

BRITISH Gas last night came under fire for misleading advertising tactics when industry watchdog, Ofgas, launched an investigation into its current campaign. BG has launched advertisements inviting customers canvassed by rival companies to ring its information line for advice. Ofgas has asked the company to withdraw the adverts. Regulator Clare Spottiswood said: "BG is hardly a source of unbiased information." She urged any worried consumers to call the Ofgas help line for information without any sales spin. — *Celia Weston*

Economists are given the dope on life's prospects

CHARLOTTE DENNY on how the sums add up for educators

AMONG the bits of conventional wisdom in giving children the tools for success are to educate them in small classes and keep them away from under-age drinking and drugs.

But economists threw cold water on those ideas yesterday, releasing two economic reports suggesting that neither crowded classrooms nor under-age drinking affect the academic performance or earning power of teenagers.

Economist Anna Vignoles told the Royal Economic Society's annual conference that reducing class sizes was "an expensive option and I would be surprised if it would have substantial impact on pupils' achievement". Ms Vignoles and colleague Peter Doughty looked at how a group of pupils educated in the early 1970s fared in later life. Once the innate ability of the students was taken into account, the money spent per pupil or the size of classes did not affect how they performed in exams or how much they earned once they started work.

Other researchers at the Royal Economic Society reported that an American survey suggested that smoking cannabis or drinking alcohol under age did not harm career prospects, although taking hard drugs did. The poll — which has followed a large group of Americans since 1979 — found that one in two black youths and two out of three white teenagers admitted

to drinking under age. Simon Burgess and Carol Propper of Bristol University told the conference that under-age drinking or cannabis smoking did not lower their earnings ten years later. But violent adolescents and those who took hard drugs earned, on average, 40 per cent less per week than their peers, ten years on. They were also more likely to be unemployed.

Insurers turn complementary

Private funds back unconventional treatments, writes Rupert Jones

SOME still regard it as quackery, but leading private medical insurance providers are rushing to embrace the world of alternative and complementary medicine. Abbey National announced yesterday that it was making it easier for holders of its private health-care policies to access treatments such as osteopathy, acupuncture, homeopathy and chiropractic. The bank said that increasing numbers of people appreciated the value of complementary medicine and it was keen to satisfy this demand. Previously, acupuncture and homeopathy were available only after customers had seen a hospital consultant, but now only a GP's referral will be required. This week BUPA, the market leader in private medical insurance, introduced cover of up to £250 a year for osteopathy, chiropractic, homeopa-

thy and acupuncture. "From a medical perspective these therapies are becoming more and more recognised as being appropriate treatments," said Anne Marie Cooklin of BUPA. "There is more evidence that shows these kinds of therapies do help people." Gug Kyriacou of Abbey National conceded that complementary therapy was generally less costly than, for example, seeing a conventional Harley Street specialist. However, complementary medicine has soared in popularity in recent years. The market for herbal medicines, homeopathic remedies and aromatherapy oils alone is worth more than £70 million, and nearly 40 per cent of GPs are referring their patients for complementary or alternative treatment. "There is a demand out there, and the treatment does actually work," said a spokesman for insurer Legal & General. Abbey National will authorise only claims for homeopathic treatment conducted by someone who is a practising registered medical practitioner, a full member of the Faculty of Homeopathy and has appropriate qualifications. In order to receive BUPA's blessing, a therapist needs to belong to a recognised professional body, have been in practice for a specified period and provides references, among other criteria. PPP Healthcare was one of the first private medical insurers to introduce cover for complementary medicine, in 1995. "Some of these things it is very difficult to get on the NHS," said a spokesman. PPP covers seven complementary therapies including the four outlined above plus sports medicine, muscular-skeletal medicine and "psycho-sexual medicine".



Pressing the point... osteopath Ron Marx delivers treatment to a patient. PHOTOGRAPH: ULRIKE PREUSS

The alternative option

Homeopathy works on the theory that "like cures like" — a minute dose of a drug will cure symptoms which it would cause, given in a larger dose. Acupuncture has been practised in China for thousands of years. It restores the flow of energy by stimulating points on the body — either by inserting needles or applying massage. More than one million adults in Britain have had acupuncture — 3 per cent of the population. Osteopathy is one of the most widely used and trusted complementary therapies. Muscles and spine are manipulated to improve mobility and balance and thereby well-being. Chiropractic is similar to osteopathy but focuses particularly on the spine and central nervous system. The market for herbal medicines, homeopathic remedies and aromatherapy oils is worth about £72 million.

Let cycles take the commuting strain

Tony May

CYCLING is often the fastest way to get around a city, but Bike N' Rack — a business combining bike parking, servicing, hire and sales — wants to prosper by making pedalling more convenient. It opened its first centre at Victoria yesterday and managing director Clive Long plans to expand across London and then throughout Britain. Such schemes are widespread on the Continent, where bikes account for up to 28 per cent of journeys compared with 2 per cent here. One snag for commuters is that not all trains allow passengers to carry cycles — so Bike N' Rack will provide safe parking for \$9 a week. Mr Long also offers hire bikes — supplied by the London and then throughout Britain. Such schemes are widespread on the Continent, where bikes account for up to 28 per cent of journeys compared with 2 per cent here. One snag for commuters is that not all trains allow passengers to carry cycles — so Bike N' Rack will provide safe parking for \$9 a week. 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Deal holds but executive collapses



All too much... Rex Stephenson, a senior executive director at Deutsche Telekom, is helped by colleagues during a fainting fit at a press conference to announce the joint venture with Energis and France Telecom. He had been up all night finalising the deal.

Energis launches new UK telecom challenge

Chris Barrie, Media Business Correspondent

THE battle for the booming market in business communications was stepped up yesterday as the British operator Energis signed a joint venture agreement with the national telecom companies of France and Germany. The deal aims to deliver the latest telecom services to corporate clients.

The pact, signed yesterday morning with France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom, will allow the three to compete directly with rivals such as British Telecom and Cable & Wireless Communications

which dominate the market. The deal will fund the construction of high-capacity transmission systems in British cities, beginning with London. There are plans for networks in Manchester, Birmingham and five as yet unnamed towns. The City welcomed the deal and Energis shares soared 19 per cent to 665p.

The joint venture company, called MetroHolding, will spend £100 million over five years to create "core" networks capable of carrying the latest hi-tech applications for business. Energis will put up half the funding with the others each contributing 33 per cent.

The three companies will capacity network across the UK but, lacking international partners and its own "local loop", the connection from client premises to the national network. MetroHolding will build and manage networks in key business districts to free Energis and its partners from dependence on rivals like BT or the cable companies.

Energis, which will run the new company, may add another £100 million on building a final short stretch of connection linking clients' premises to the MetroHolding network, chief executive Mike Grabner said.

The joint venture does not extend to the sale of services. The three companies will compete for customers, routing the business over the shared network and paying a fee to MetroHolding. The move also allows France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom to enter the British market in a serious manner.

Paul Grosse, a senior executive director of the international division of Deutsche Telekom, said the company sought a market share of between 5 and 10 per cent of UK business services.

MetroHolding will build networks in targeted districts. Energis has already completed its network in London's Docklands, where many Internet providers are based, and is completing its infrastructure in the Broadgate centre in the City. Networks will be built in Aldgate, St Paul's, Monument and Canary Wharf by the year-end. One quarter of the UK's business telecom market is in the City of London.

Mr Grabner said MetroHolding would allow Energis to build new networks to more cities and up to a year earlier than planned. There would be no significant effect on capital spending plans, but there would be a drop in fees to other carriers. Energis currently pays 40 per cent of its revenues to other operators for using their connections.

Energis, which is still largely owned by the National Grid, has 1.5 per cent of the UK business market. A deal whereby US manufacturers would pay \$388.5 billion over 25 years to settle smoking-related illness actions is now being replaced by Congressional proposals to hit the industry with \$600 billion in damages — but with none of the protection against litigation.

France puts £3bn defence deal on hold

David Gow, Industrial Editor

THE restructuring of Europe's defence industry suffered another blow yesterday when last-minute French demands forced a delay in awarding an order for new "battlefield taxis" worth up to £3 billion. The British and German defence ministries had been poised to announce that an initial order for 600 multi-role armoured vehicles (MRVs) for their armies had gone to a consortium headed by GKN and three German partners — Krauss-Maffei, Rheinmetall and Wegmann — against a counter-bid from a group led by Vickers.

But, after months of dithering, it appears the French have demanded to be included and have persuaded the Germans to squeeze the UK and put the order on hold, at least until the end of this month. A Commons written reply from defence secretary, George Robertson, was hastily withdrawn.

The French are also said to be demanding a bigger share of the MRV workload for state-owned Giat, a junior partner in GKN's group known as Euroconsortium.

The order for modern, air-conditioned troop carriers — eventually up to 3,000 for Germany and 2,000 for Britain — is seen as the biggest of its kind for years to come and critical to the defence industry rationalisation demanded by the British, French and German governments.

It could eventually comprise 7,500 vehicles if the French and Dutch take part and has provoked the fiercest lobbying seen in Whitehall and European ministries in recent years.

The Vickers consortium, Team International comprising Alvis of the UK, Henschel and Kuka of Germany and France's Panhard, virtually conceded defeat yesterday. After the pending sale of Rolls-Royce Motors, Vickers had hoped to focus on armoured vehicles. The loss of the contract, according to some analysts, could prompt either a merger with European rivals or a takeover.

Both the German and UK defence ministries stressed the order would go ahead. "In collaborative projects announcements have to be coordinated with all the partners and one of them was not ready to go ahead. There's no disagreement on the outcome of the competition and we expect an announcement later this month," the MoD said.

Responsible employers should draw up clear procedures for dealing with sexual harassment claims. They should also make

clear the standards of behaviour expected. The society commissioned consultant Judi James to write a guide, *Sex at Work*, which concludes that office

romances are partly due to Britons working the longest hours in Europe. "Put any number of people of the opposite sex in a room together for hours at a time and the odds are that hormones will start buzzing and testosterone flowing before long."

For couples itching to consummate their passion in the office, Ms James provides a checklist of most popular hot spots.

Desktops are number one favourite, followed by stationery cupboards (preferably cramped), photocopyers, the roof (sloping or flat) and the car park. For "speedy practitioners" there is always the lift.

And finally, there is the boss's office, albeit with a warning: "For members of the Dangerous Sports Club only, unless you happen to be the boss."

Ms James, who interviewed more than 1,000 workers at scores of companies, was amazed at how much flirting there is in "serious and stuffy" offices. "A lot of staff in City-type firms look as if they are having an affair with their computer, but there is a lot of chatting-up going on."

Office work can be boring, so sexual "frisson" can relieve boredom, says the guide, noting that people usually dress smarter at work than at home and so appear more attractive.

The guide lists out of bounds touching including bottom-patting, boob-brushing, shoulder-bugging and body squeezing. The author also identifies a new breed of office predators including "lurkers" and "loamers".

Do: Make it politely but firmly clear if you are not interested. Use residential training courses for training, not hanky panky. Ensure there are no existing relationships. Keep your career in mind. Will it suffer if things turn sour?

Avoid: entanglements involving people of unequal status — the junior often ends up sacked. Imagine how he or she will shape up out of the office in ordinary clothes. Will your friends notice?

Don't: Have sex on the first date. Boast about your conquest, having turned down a colleague's advances. Indulge in the act in full view of the security cameras. Assume that someone fancies you if they are staring at your mouth; you may have apinache between your teeth.

Spend all day exchanging torrid e-mail messages with your beloved. Choose events like the office party at which to light the fuse. Make a lunge for the person you fancy, at a party for clients.

Code of conduct

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Notebook

Global credibility gap is plugged



Edited by Lisa Buckingham

THE deal aligned by Energis with France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom looks smart. Not only does Energis get access to outside funds to build local networks that it needs, it gets two international partners to plug the gap in its credibility on the global stage and it opens the door to the UK market for competitors to BT.

The deal seems to signal that Energis is taken seriously overseas.

Foreign relations matter in communications, a business that is rapidly evolving as a global affair. If Energis is one day to be a takeover candidate the bid will almost certainly come from abroad.

But the complexities behind MetroHolding mean that there is still a lot to be determined.

Most of the clients on the new networks will be existing customers, not new ones. This may cut the charges that Energis pays to other carriers, but it will not mean the business will grow as the company plans.

Targeting the business market will not be easy either. BT may be prepared to see its residential market erode to offset regulatory pressure for more competition, but it will not forgo the booming demand for data services anything like so easily.

There are other rivals in the corporate market, and its own partners in the new venture will compete much more vigorously in future: yesterday's arrangement leaves the trio co-operating on the construction of the infrastructure but competing on the supply of services.

MetroHolding offers an elegant solution to the costly prospect of building new infrastructure. But the huge rise in the Energis share price will be justified only if it makes significant headway in a fast growing but very crowded market.

Price of smoking

AFTER the 1989 buy-out which left RJR Nabisco with \$25 billion of debt, it became accepted that virtually no financial burden was too great for the world's great cash-cow: tobacco. Now, it seems, US legislators — not to mention some would-be litigators on this side of the Atlantic — are seeking to disprove this.

A deal whereby US manufacturers would pay \$388.5 billion over 25 years to settle smoking-related illness actions is now being replaced by Congressional proposals to hit the industry with \$600 billion in damages — but with none of the protection against litigation.

Why indeed? Why not within three hours? How about televising the committee's proceedings?

Defenders of the conventional wisdom are treating the symptoms, not the illness. Nine years ago, Nigel Lawson insisted that the Bank should be able to set interest rates as monetary policy was a technical matter, akin to the navigation of a ship.

Now we know better. Interest-rate decisions are fundamentally political, not technical, so the length of time before deliberations become public is irrelevant.

Indeed the committee is starting to resemble the gaggle of trade-union barons that allegedly ran policy during the last Labour government.

Predator sizes up Courtaulds

Shares in February, when they were languishing at a long-term low, or wait until Courtaulds' planned merger, which takes place in July.

Courtaulds, which demerged its textile activities in 1989, said in February that it planned to sell its packaging materials business and split again.

This time it aims to float the specialist paint operation, leaving the company to concentrate on viscose and acrylic fibre production, including the "wonder fibre", Tenel.

The company warned that, as part of the restructuring, 500 staff in the Midlands would lose their jobs out of a 7,500-strong British workforce.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.479 Austria 21.29 Belgium 62.25 Canada 2.309 Cyprus 0.978 Denmark 11.57 Finland 8.25 France 10.086

Germany 3.0223 Greece 226.33 Hong Kong 12.57 India 66.16 Ireland 1.3916 Israel 0.03 Italy 2.997

Malaysia 6.15 Malta 0.8499 Netherlands 3.3688 New Zealand 2.98 Norway 12.48 Portugal 202.49 Saudi Arabia 2.15 Singapore 2.88 South Africa 8.28 Spain 164.29 Sweden 13.17 Switzerland 2.465 Turkey 500.429 USA 1.8343

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